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Mr. Kichiyemon as *Mitsuhide*

Tales from Old Japanese Dramas

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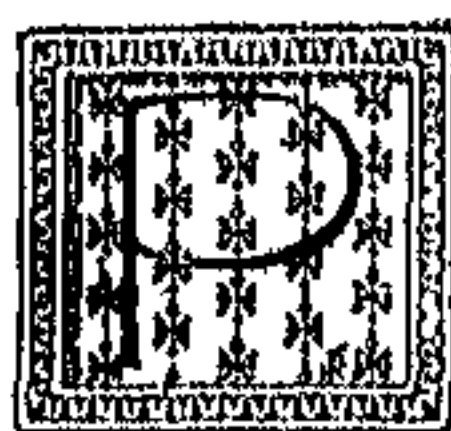
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FOREWORD



PEOPLE in England and America probably do not realize what a large part is played by the Theatre in the life of the Japanese people. This volume will help to give them some idea of it; and, as a nation, like an individual, reveals perhaps more of its true self in its amusements than in the serious business of life, a perusal of these pages, giving as they do an idea of the stories which appeal most strongly to the taste of the Japanese public, may help towards a wider understanding of the Japanese national character. The hold which the classical drama still exercises on the theatre-goers of Japan may come as a surprise to many, but should provide a strong link of sympathy to the country from which Shakespeare's genius sprung. In recommending this short history of the Japanese stage from the earliest times down to the present day, to all who are interested in the evolution of the drama

throughout the world, I feel confident that I am rendering them a genuine service, and if others, who are anxious on more general lines to endeavour to learn more of the spirit and genius of the people of this Empire, will devote a short time to the study of this subject, I am sure they will be more than repaid for their pains.

KILMARNOCK.

BRITISH EMBASSY, TOKYO,
March 20, 1915.

PREFACE



HERE are three great periods in the history of Japanese literature: the Nara Period (710-784), the Heian Period (800-1186), and the Yedo Period (1603-1867); and as the *Manyō Shū*, an anthology, and the *Genji Monogatari*, a romance, are respectively the representative masterpieces of the first two periods, so the *jōruri* or epical dramas are the representative productions of the Yedo Period.

The following tales are condensed and adapted from famous epical dramas by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, the "Shakespeare of Japan," Ki-no-Kaion, Chikamatsu Hanji, and five other great writers. With the exception of *The Love of Komachi the Poetess*, these dramas are very long, and exceedingly intricate in plot, so that in most cases, one or two acts only of each piece, which are of permanent interest, are chanted or performed. The present author has done his best

to select the essential points of these dramas, while omitting tedious details which have no important connection with the main plot. He has also endeavoured to give a brief account of such passages as are essential to the main plot, but are of little interest, and to reproduce, in their original form, as far as possible, those acts which are usually chanted or performed.

The author's best thanks are due to Mr. Masukichi Suishu, who gave him valuable assistance in the choice and condensation of the originals; to Professor A. W. Playfair, who revised the manuscript of one of these stories, and to Mr. Sakayé Okano for the preparation of the cover design.

A. M.

Tokyo,
March, 1915.

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Tales from Old Japanese Dramas

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INTRODUCTION



THE Japanese drama is of four classes: the *nō* (*yōkyoku*) or lyrical drama, the *kyōgen* or farce, the *kyaku-hon* or pure drama, and the *jōruri* or epical drama.

The *nō* dramas are short lyrical stories founded for the most part on the folklore of Japan, China, and other Oriental countries. They are written in exceedingly beautiful language, and are full of quotations from ancient saws and songs. They bear a curious resemblance to the old Greek drama in that they are entirely chanted, in that many of the characters use masks, and in that a chorus takes up the action where the dialogue leaves off. But they are too simple and primitive in plot, and too deficient in lucidity and coherence to have much value as dramas. These composi-

tions were devised for the entertainment of the military classes in the Muromachi Period (1392–1603), the Dark Age of Japan; and their performance was favoured and protected by the Shogun and other noblemen. Their chanted recitation is nowadays in much vogue among the upper classes.

The *kyōgen* or farces are even shorter and more primitive, and of slight construction. They are performed generally on the same stage as the *nō*, in the intervals between the more serious pieces. The *nō* and the *kyōgen*, therefore, may be called sister dramas for the upper classes.

The *kyaku-hon*, which are nearly the same as the European drama, were mostly written in the middle and the latter days of the Yedo Period. They were, and are much used for the theatre. But most of their authors were minor writers; and therefore the *kyaku-hon*, as a whole, do not contain much work of a literary value, although they are incomparably superior as dramas to the *nō* and the *kyōgen*.

On the other hand, the *jōruri* or epical dramas, which were also written in the Yedo Period, are such valuable literature, that they are generally

considered to be the representative works of the Yedo Period, and *jōruri*, and *gikyoku* of drama, are commonly used as synonyms. The *jōruri* is in form an epic poem, consisting of a long story, written largely in a series of the alternation of seven- and five-syllable phrases, as follows:

No-ko-ru tsu-bo-mi no
Ia-na hi-to-tsu
Mi-zu a-ge-ka-ne-shi
Fu-ze-i ni-té
Shi-an na-ge-ku-bi
Shi-o-ru-ru ba-ka-ri.
Yō-yō na-mi-da
O-shi-to-do-mé
Ia-ha sa-ma ni-mo
Ba-ba sa-ma ni-mo
Ko-re kon-jō no
I-to-ma-go-i.
Ko-no mi-no ne-ga-i
Ka-nō ta-re-ba
O-mo-i o-ku-ko-to
Sa-ra-ni na-shi.
Etc. etc.

“Alone left, he fell into reverie,¹
 With drooping head like a flower withering,
 Incapable of drawing water up.

¹ See Chapter v. of *The Treason of Mitsuhide*.

A good while later, tears he wiped away,
And said in whispers, 'Mother, grandmother,
'Tis my last farewell unto you, my dears.
As my request is granted willingly,
I leave this world without regrets whate'er.
How kindly eighteen years you've brought me up!
Your favours higher than the mountain are,
And deeper than the ocean depths indeed!
Remember 'tis a soldier's common lot
To bravely fight to death on battlefield,
And pardon me for leaving life ere you.
And now, Hatsugiku, 'tis fortunate
For us, that we've not nuptial cups exchanged.
So give me up, and wed another man.
But oh, poor girl! at tidings of my death,
How bitterly she'll weep and grieve, methinks!'"

But in substance and use, the *jōruri* is a drama. It has a well-marked movement of plot from the opening scene, up to the final catastrophe; it abounds in dramatic situations, and many of the scenes are obviously designed with a view to spectacular effect. It was originally written for the *ayatsuri shibai*, or marionette theatre, but afterwards its use was also adopted for the regular theatre.

Its large narrative element, and often a part of the dialogue are of the poetic character just

Marionette Performances



A scene from *The Chūshingura*



A scene from *The Yoshitsune Sombanzakura*

described. These parts are chanted to the music of the *samisen*, a three-stringed guitar, by a chorus seated on a platform overlooking the stage, on the spectator's right. The chorus also declaims the speeches of the puppet actors. In the case of the theatre proper, the actors carry on all the dialogue, except a part of it just mentioned, and act and dance to the recitation of the narrative part, in a similar manner to the puppets. The narrative part not only supplies the thread of the story, in order to connect the scenes represented by the puppet actors, or the living actors on the stage, but aids the imagination of the audience by describing expressions of countenance, scenery, and many other details that the resources of a theatre cannot but fail to convey. Though the *jōruri* is poetry, yet it is written in simple and easy language, quite intelligible even to peasants, coolies, and children. It is emphatically a literature for the masses.

From this general account regarding the nature of the epical drama, we may now take a glance at a brief history of its origin and development.

| Some time during the Muromachi Period (1392-1603) the profession of chanting or reciting

stories or popular histories in public came into existence. These recitals were accompanied by taps of a fan, to mark time or to give emphasis. The *Taiheiki*, a sketch of the political history of the Kamakura Period (1186-1332), the *Heike-Monogatari*, or the "Story of the Taira Family," and several children's stories were made use of for this purpose. Toward the close of the sixteenth century, to this accompaniment was added the music of the *samisen*, a three-stringed guitar introduced shortly before from Loochoo. This improvement gave a stimulus to the profession which became more and more popular.

About that time was written a story entitled *Jōruri Jūnidan Sōshi*, or the "Story of Lady Jōruri." It was in twelve acts, and had a wide circulation among the story reciters. Tradition says that its author was a maid of honour to Oda Nobunaga, named Ono no Otsū, but there is no authenticity for this belief. The following is the gist of the story:

A high-ranked *samurai* in the post-town of Yahagi, in Mikawa Province, prays the God Jōruri Kō to bless him with a child. In response to his earnest prayers, a beautiful girl is born to



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A marionette performance given at the Horiyozu, Ōsaka

his wife. He names the girl Jōruri after the God. Many years later, when she is a blooming maiden, Shana-ō-Maru (the famous hero Yoshitsuné), on his way to Ōshyū, stays at Yahagi. He and Jōruri fall in love with each other, and exchange vows of fidelity. Though simple in plot, the story embodies the rudiments of a drama. Henceforward any compositions used by the professional reciters came to be called *jōruri*, and the reciters themselves, *jōruri-katari*, or *jōruri* chanters; and this is the origin of the name of *jōruri* which is now applied to the epical drama.

In the era of Keichō (1596-1615) a noted *samisen* player of Kyōto named Menukiya Chōzaburō, in conjunction with a certain Hikita, a puppet showman of Nishinomiya in Settsu, started the art of working marionettes to the accompaniment of *jōruri* recitation, and the *samisen* music. This *ayatsuri-shibui*, or marionette theatre, rapidly grew in general favour, so much that the Emperor Go-Yōzei was pleased to summon the troupe to his palace to inspect their performances.

Towards the middle of the seventeenth century there was in Yedo a great *jōruri* chanter called Satsuma Jōun. His bold and energetic manner

of recitation was well suited to the martial spirit then prevalent. He not only commanded large audiences, but *daimios* and other noblemen gave him their patronage. An author named Oka Seibei is said to have written for him a number of stories. Some of them are known as "Kimpira-Bon," and are still in existence. They relate the adventures of Kimpira, a fictitious hero of Herculean strength and gigantic stature, who achieves military exploits, destroys demons, and slays savage beasts. These stories were listened to with great interest by the general public. They particularly received an enthusiastic welcome from the ignorant *samurai* of those days. Thus Jōun and his pupils enjoyed great popularity for some years.

Several years after the death of Jōun, a great *jōruri* chanter named Takemoto Gidayū made his appearance in Ōsaka. He was gifted with a loud, musical voice, and originated a new style of recitation. In 1685 he established a marionette theatre called the Takemoto Za in Dōtombori, Ōsaka. The following year he began to chant pieces written at his request by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, the founder of the epical drama. Now

that an era of peace and refinement had prevailed for many long years under the Tokugawa régime, the public was tired of primitive stories, such as "Kimpira-Bon" and the "Story of Lady Jōruri," chanted in a simple and monotonous manner. The people craved for something novel and exhilarating. Under the circumstances the Takemoto Za supplied just what was wanted. Accordingly, Gidayū's fame soon spread throughout Japan, and his style overshadowed all the other artistes of that time. His school flourished more and more as time went on, until at last the *jōruri* began to be more popularly called *gidayū* and its reciters *gidayū-katari*.

There has been much dispute concerning the birthplace of Chikamatsu Monzayemon. The most accepted opinion was that he was a native of Hagi in the province of Chōshū. But most of the scholars of recent times have concluded that he was born a *samurai* of Kyōto in 1653. In his younger days he was a Buddhist priest. It must be remembered that the priests were then the most learned class; and it is probable that Monzayemon's great erudition, which afterwards blossomed forth into his immortal masterpieces,

was acquired chiefly during his sacerdotal life. Later he returned to secular life, and for a few years served a Kyōto court noble as his retainer. Next we find him an author of stories and *kyaku hon* or pure dramas. His name, however, was not widely known.

The *Shussé Kagékiyo*, or "The Successful Career of Kagékiyo," his very first epical drama, was written for Gidayū. It was performed at the Takemoto Za in 1686. The performance of this historical play raised the fame of both its author and chanter to great prominence. At that time a new epoch in the literary and chanters' world began. Four years later Monzayemon took up his residence in Ōsaka as playwright for the Takemoto Za. From this time until his death in 1724 he produced, in rapid succession, about a hundred pieces. His acquaintance with the Chinese and the Japanese classics, and with the Buddhist and Shinto religions, his good knowledge of the world, and his fertile and inventive genius, combined to make him a writer of unique merits.

The *Nagamachi Onna Harakiri*, or "The Woman's Harakiri at Long Street," appeared in 1700. This realistic drama, the very first of his so-called

sewa mono or dramas of life and manners, of which he wrote twenty-four, was warmly welcomed by the public. In 1703 appeared the *Sonezaki Shinjū*. This drama deals with the *shinjū* or double suicide of a couple of young lovers. This was the first of the so-called *shinjū-mono*, or dramas of double suicide; and it was so enthusiastically received by the public, that this subject became a favourite theme for the work of contemporary dramatists. *Shinjū*, it must be remarked *en passant*, often takes place in Japan. When a pair of passionate young lovers despair of obtaining their parents' permission for their marriage, or when any other circumstance prevents them from attaining their purpose, they, instead of eloping, often commit suicide together. By doing this, they hope to be united in the next world. And it is said that the *Sonezaki Shinjū*, the *Tenno Amijima*, and other *shinjū mono* by Monzayemon, which describe this tragic suicide in beautiful language, interested the hearers to such an extent, that after their appearance the number of cases of suicide among lovers increased to an alarming extent. This was, if it was a fact, surely an evil influence of Monzayemon's dramas; but it is undeniable that his

works, and those by the subsequent writers, on the whole, exerted a good influence on public morals, as we shall learn later on.

In 1715, after Gidayū's death, and when the Takemoto Za was on the verge of bankruptcy, though his pupils Tanomo and some other able chanters did their best, the *Kokusenya Kassen* by Monzayemon appeared. It is reproduced in the present volume as "The Battles of Kokusenya." It met with such an enthusiastic reception, that it was performed to overcrowded audiences for seventeen months in succession, and the resultant income saved the theatre from the crisis. This piece, together with the *Yuki-onna Gomai Hagoita*, or "The Loyalty of Five Heroes," and the *Soga Kwaikeizan*, or "The Revenge of the Soga Brothers," all historical plays, are generally considered to be Monzayemon's greatest masterpieces. But it is the present writer's humble opinion that the *Tenno Amijima*, or "The Double Suicide at Amijima," must be added to the honoured number. Dr. Tsubouchi, an authority on this subject, says: "The *Tenno Amijima* is evidently the greatest of Monzayemon's masterpieces."

The popularity of the Takemoto Za gave rise

to a powerful rival, and their competition contributed to the improvement of marionettes and the development of the epical drama. An ambitious, excellent pupil of Gidayū, named Toyotaké Wakatayū, established an independent marionette theatre called the Toyotaké Za in 1702, in the same quarter as the Takemoto Za, with Ki-no-Kaion, an able writer, as its playwright. After Gidayū's retirement three years later, the new theatre prospered nearly as much as the older one did.

Kaion was born in 1663, so that he was ten years younger than Monzayemon. His father, though merely a confectioner, was proficient in writing *haikai* or seventeen-syllabled verse, and his elder brother was a well-known *kyōkashi* or comic poet called Yuyensai Teiryū. In his youth Kaion was a pupil of Abbot Yetsuzan of the Kaki-moto Temple at Sakai, in the province of Izumi. Later he became a layman; and taking up his residence in Ōsaka, practised medicine. In his leisure hours he studied Japanese classics under Keichū, a noted scholar.

From 1702, when his connection with the Toyotaké Za commenced, until his retirement in 1723,

he diligently wrote one drama after another. In order to compete with Monzayemon, he often wrote on nearly the same topic as his antagonist. Thus while Monzayemon wrote the *Sonezaki Shinjū*, or "The Love Suicide at Sonezaki," in 1703, Kaion wrote the *Yaoya O-Shichi*, or "O-Shichi, the Greengrocer's Daughter," in the following year. The *Aburaya Osomé Tamoto no Shirashibori*, and the *Banshū Soné no Matsu* by Kaion, answer respectively to the *Umegawa Chūbei*, and the *Yōmei Tennō Shokunin-Kagami* by Monzayemon. And it can be greatly ascribed to the merits of Kaion's dramas, that the Toyotaké Za could hold its own with the Takemoto Za. Among his forty dramas, the *Yaoya O-Shichi*, the *Kamakura Sandaiki*, and the *Shinjū Futatsu Hara-obi*, are generally considered the best pieces. But in the present author's judgment, the *Ono no Komachi Miyako no Toshidama*, which is represented in this volume under the title of "The Love of Komachi the Poetess," is as great a work as any of them, and far more interesting to European readers.

Kaion was succeeded by Nishizawa Ippū (1665-1731) who wrote twelve pieces in collaboration with Yasuda Abun, and Namiki Sōsuké. About

this time the custom originated of two or three, sometimes five or six authors collaborating in writing the same drama. Ippū's best work, the *Iiōjō Tokiyori Ki*, though it was an adaptation from Monzayemon's the *Iiyakunin Jōrō*, was so warmly received that it was considered as good as the *Kokusenya Kassen*.

Namiki Sōsuké (1694-1750), the greatest writer next to Kaion for the Toyotaké Za, wrote more than twenty pieces in collaboration with three or four authors. Among his best works are the *Nasuno Yoichi Saikai no Suzuri*, the *Karukaya Dōshin Tsukushi no Iyezuto*, and the *Ichinotani Futaba Gunki*, the last of which is reproduced in the present volume as "The Battle of Ichi-notani." Sōsuké wrote the first three acts of this long and intricate drama, and died without completing it. Asada Itchō, and four other pupils of his, wrote the sequel, which consists of two long acts. The drama is very popular as an excellent illustration of *bushidō*, or the moral principles regulating the actions of the Japanese knighthood.

The playwright for the Takemoto Za, who succeeded Monzayemon, was Takéda Izumo (1691-

1756). He also became proprietor of the theatre when Gidayū retired. He wrote thirty-two excellent pieces. In 1723 appeared his maiden work, the *Ōtō no Miya Asahi no Yoroi*, which he wrote in collaboration with Matsuda Bunkōdō. It was revised by his master Monzayemon. Among his best works are the *Yoshitsuné Sembonzakura*, the *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami*, and the *Kanadehon Chūshingura*, or "The Treasury of Faithful Retainers," which is a version of the famous story of the Forty-seven Rōnins. The *Chūshingura*¹ is such a favourite with the Japanese that any theatre, whose audiences are remarkably falling off, can regain its popularity by performing one or two acts of this drama.

Matsuda Bunkōdō, who wrote the *Ōtō no Miya Asahi no Yoroi* in collaboration with Izumo, was also the author of twenty other dramas, the best of which are the *Ki-ichi Hōgen Sanryaku no Maki* and the *Danno-ura Kabuto Gunki*. But most of them were joint works written with Miyoshi Shōraku and Haségawa Senshi. Miyoshi Shōraku, who was first a priest and then a physician, took

¹ This drama is translated into English both by Mr. F. V. Dickins and by Mr. Jūkichi Inouyé.

lessons under Izumo, and became a dramatist. He wrote about fifty pieces, as a collaborator. His best work is the *Imoséyama Onna Teikin*. Shōraku and Bunkōdō were also playwrights for the Takemoto Za.

Chikamatsu Hanji, who called himself Chikamatsu on account of his being a writer of the Monzayemon school, wrote fifty-four pieces for the Takemoto Za, in collaboration with two or three writers. His best works are the *Iionchō Nijūshikō*, the *Sekitori Senryō Nobori*, and the *Shimpan Uta Zaimon*, from the last of which the present author has adapted "O-Somé and Hisamatsu," or a Japanese Romeo and Juliet. This drama is so popular, that it is performed all the year round at some theatre or other.

Chikamatsu Tokuzō (1753-1810), a pupil of Chikamatsu Hanji, wrote many pieces for the Toyotaké Za. His best works are the *Iiana wa Uyeno Iiomaré no Ishibumi*, and the *Iakoné Reigen Izari Katakuchi*, which is reproduced in the present volume as "Katsugorō's Revenge." About 1804, he wrote a *kyaku-hon* entitled the *Asagao Nikki*, or "Miss Morning-glory's Diary," the plot of which was suggested to him by Kumazawa Banzan's

poem on the morning-glory, and a folklore story in the *Konjaku Monogatari*. In 1850, another author adapted this *kyaku-hon* and wrote the famous *Shō-utsushi Asagao Banashi*. This is represented in the present volume as "The Sufferings of Miss Deep-Snow." Strangely enough, the author of this drama, which has made myriads of our countrymen weep and rejoice over the sorrows and joys of its heroine Miyuki, is unknown, although we have his pseudonym "Yamada Kagashi."

Chikamatsu Yanagi, who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century, wrote the *Yehon Taikō Ki*, and five other pieces. The *Taikō Ki*, which is reproduced by the present author under the title of "The Treason of Mitsuhide," is another favourite drama with our countrymen. Its tenth act, which is retold in Chapter V of the story in this volume, at nearly the same length as in the original, is familiar to any adult person. This piece was performed at a small marionette theatre in Ōsaka in 1799.

Both the Takemoto Za and the Toyotaké Za reached the zenith of their prosperity at the middle of the eighteenth century, when Izumo and Sōsuké

wrote for them. Then they began gradually to decline, and were closed towards the end of the same century. Then the centre of the marionette theatre, and of the epical drama, was transferred to Yedo, where they flourished for a little more than half a century. It must further be noted that, while the above-mentioned theatres flourished in Ōsaka, there were one or two small marionette theatres in Kyōto, and that the troupes of the Ōsaka theatres now and then visited Kyōto, and the chief towns in the vicinity of Ōsaka, to give their performances. It is said that the epical dramatists, who lived during this whole period, numbered about two hundred, and their compositions reached the enormous total of one thousand. But it is only about thirty of these writers, including those mentioned above, whose works are worthy of note, and most of these best authors were connected with the Ōsaka theatres.

As has just been remarked, towards the end of the eighteenth century the epical drama had declined in Ōsaka, and begun to bloom forth in Yedo, where it flourished until towards the middle of the nineteenth century. It is true that in the era of Kyōhō (1716–1735) and afterwards, many

of *gidayū* chanters and puppet players of Ōsaka went up to Yedo, and gave their performances. But the epical dramas they used were all compositions by the Ōsaka writers. About that time, Toyotaké Hizen no Jō, a famous *gidayū* chanter, established a marionette theatre called Hizen Za in Yedo; while another great chanter, Satsuma Geki, established a rival theatre called Geki Za or Satsuma Za. For several years after their establishment, these theatres invited chanters from Ōsaka, and performed dramas by Ōsaka writers; but about 1770, they began to perform pieces by Yedo dramatists.

Hiraga Gennai (1729-1779), whose pseudonym was Fuku-uchi Kigwai, was the greatest among the Yedo epical dramatists. He was the eldest son of a *samurai* of low rank of Shido-ura in Sanuki Province. But the ambitious youth gave his birthright to his brother, and went to Nagasaki, where he studied the Dutch language, botany, and physics. Later he went to Yedo, where he studied Chinese and Japanese classics. He was gifted with wonderful talents, and made several industrial inventions. Unluckily, however, he could find no one to patronize them. Therefore, by

way of giving vent to his discontent, he took to writing humorous essays and epical dramas. His best drama is the *Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi*. The present author names his story adapted from it, "The Miracle at the Ferry of Yaguchi." It was performed at the Hizen Za in 1770, and was enthusiastically received. Its fourth act, which relates the adventure of Nitta Yoshiminé at the ferry of Yaguchi, is nowadays often performed. In 1779, Gennai went mad and killed a man, and was thrown into prison where he soon died of illness.

The following are the most noteworthy dramas by other great writers of Yedo: The *Koimusumé Mukashi Hachijō* (1778), by Chimakatsu Kwanshi and Yoshida Sumimaru; the *Shigano Katakuchi* (1776), by Kinokami Tarō; the *Itozakura Honchō Sodachi* (1777), by Kinokami Tarō and Tatsuda Bonji; the *Kagamiyama Kyū no Nishikiyō* (1782), by Yō Yōtai; the *Meiboku Sendai Uragi* (1785), by Chikamatsu Kwanshi, Takashi Mohei, and Yoshida Sumimaru; the *Gotaiheiki Shiraishi Banashi* (1787), by Utei Yemma and Kinokami Tarō.

The *Shō-utsushi Asagao Banashi* which, as has been stated appeared in 1850, and the *Ilanano*

Kumo Sakura no Akebono, by Toyoshima Gyokuwaken and a collaborator, which appeared in 1853, were the last epical dramas ever written. These two dramas were performed in Yedo for the first time.

At present, marionette performances are now and then given in Tokyo, at Asakusa Park, by two skilful puppet players named Yūki Magosaburō and Yoshida Kunigorō; but they attract few spectators. There are in Ōsaka two marionette theatres called respectively the Bunraku Za and the Chikamatsu Za. The former was established about a hundred years ago by an amateur chanter named Uyemura Bunraku Ken. The latter was established in 1911. These two theatres, where some skilful chanters and puppet players are giving their performances, are among the great attractions of the city.

The decline of the marionette theatre and the cessation of the composition of new epical dramas are attributable chiefly to the fact that the *kabuki shibai*, or the popular theatre which was as old as the marionette theatre, had found its way by degrees into general favour and at last deprived the marionette theatre of its audiences.

We may therefore turn for a moment from the present subject and give a short account of the *kabuki shibai*.

A priestess named O Kuni, of the great shrine at Kizuki in the province of Izumo, is said to have originated the *kabuki shibai*. O Kuni went to Kyōto with her lover Nagoya Sanzaburō about 1605. They soon erected a rough stage on the dry bed of the Kamo River, on which the ex-priestess with a few other girls danced. They sang simple songs composed by Sanzaburō, to the accompaniment of the primitive music of flutes, bells, and drums. They were enthusiastically received by the citizens; and their reputation rapidly spreading far and wide, many girls took to the profession in several provinces. In 1607, O Kuni went to Yedo where her performances were greatly admired. Then in Yedo, Ōsaka, and Kyōto, actresses increased in number and some of them attained great skill. Theatre-going became fashionable among the townsfolk, and as the actresses' theatre developed it exerted evil influences on public morals. Therefore, in 1629, actresses' performances were stopped by the authorities. Then actors' theatres, which had

recently been established, became popular and some of the actors were obliged to play women's rôles. This unnatural art of the *onna-gata* (*oyama*), or "actors in women's rôles," gradually developed, until we hear of great *onna-gata* in different eras. Some famous *onna-gata* took great pains, even in their daily lives, to train themselves for women's rôles. They usually wore women's garments and used women's instruments and articles. They even spoke and behaved like women. The law prohibiting actresses was in force, in most parts of the country, until the middle of the nineteenth century. This is the reason why there have been few actresses until quite recent years. Since a few years ago, many educated girls have taken to the profession. But these actresses are generally considered to be much inferior to the *onna-gata* of the old school.

By the time Monzayemon and Kaion were flourishing, *kabuki* theatres thrived in Ōsaka, Yedo, and Kyōto. But they could not compete with the marionette theatres, because both the performers and the dramas were still in nonage. At first, the pieces produced in these theatres were the compositions of the ignorant actors, but to-

Mr. Utagemon



Mr. Utagemon as *Lady Yayegaki*

wards the middle of the eighteenth century we hear of definite authors whose works were called *kyaku-hon*. These are in form nearly the same as the European drama. With the exception of two or three writers, such as Namiki Gohei (1760–1822), the author of the *Kimmon Gosan no Kiri*, Tsuruya Namboku (1755–1829), the author of the *O-Somé Hisamatsu Ukina no Yomi-uri*, and the *Yotsuya Kwaidan*, and Furukawa Moku-ami (1715–1893), the author of the *Murai Chōan Takumi no Yaregasa*, the *kyaku-hon* writers were second or third rate authors. Their works are of little literary value and cannot be compared with the epical dramas by Monzaemon and other writers. The reason is as follows. In the *kabuki* theatre, the actors were everything and the playwrights were their slaves, so to speak, and had to suit their writings to the actors' demands. Therefore able authors of an independent spirit would not write for them. But by the middle of the eighteenth century, the *kabuki* theatres had made remarkable improvements and begun to perform the most popular of the epical dramas. Thus they soon became more popular in Ōsaka than the marionette theatres, and in Yedo, at the

middle of the nineteenth century, they were at last able to drive the marionette theatres almost out of existence.

The theatres proper of the present day are of two classes, *i. e.*, the *kabuki* theatres and the theatres of the new school. In the older style theatres, the epical dramas, old *kyaku-hon*, and *kyaku-hon* adapted from the epical dramas are used. In the modern theatres new *kyaku-hon* by native authors, and translations from European dramatists such as Shakespeare, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Shaw, and Wilde are used. These new *kyaku-hon* are quite commonplace and unpopular, while the translations are very popular among the younger generation. But it is still the performances of the epical dramas in the old school theatres which appeal most strongly to the imagination of the nation at large.

Another important thing about the epical drama is its extensive use merely for chanting purposes. In *yosé* or variety-halls, of which there are in Tōkyō at least one hundred and fifty, one or two *gidayū* chanters are numbered among their nightly performers. There are also about ten halls devoted to chantresses. The institution of chantresses



Mrs. Roshō, the most famous drama chantress



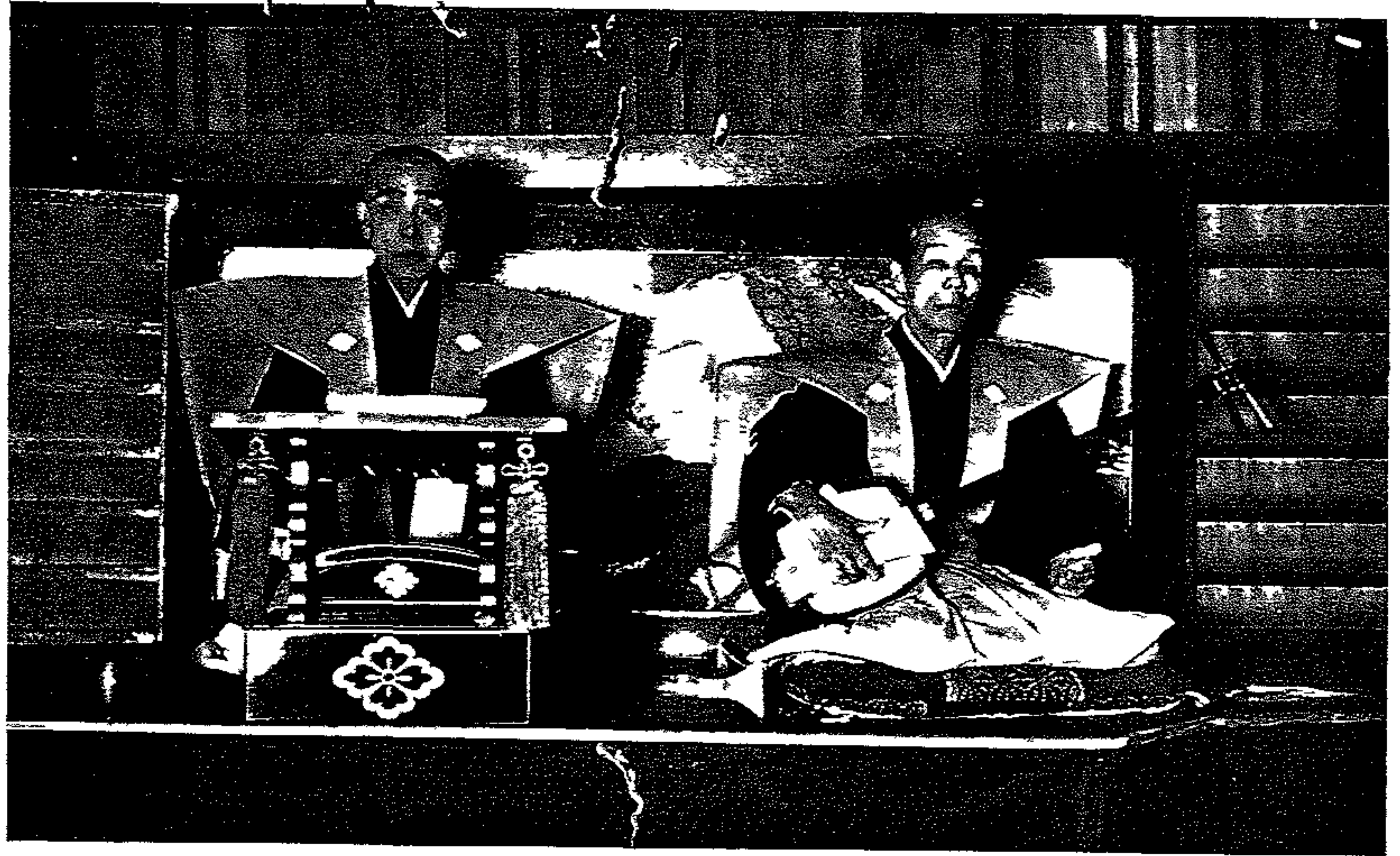
Miss Fumiyu, a drama chantress

is as old as that of chanters. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was in Yedo a great chantress named Rokuji Namuyemon. As time went on chantresses increased in number and popularity, until in the beginning of the nineteenth century there were in Yedo a hundred halls exclusively used for their recitations. But in 1842 their performances were prohibited by the authorities on account of certain abuses, and Toyotaké Hazan and a few other great chantresses were thrown into prison, where they died. In consequence of this chantresses went out of existence. ~~In fifteen~~ years or so, however, the prohibition became lax, and chantresses again became popular. Nowadays, in Ōsaka and Kyōto, as well as in Tōkyo, *musumé-gidayū* or girl chanters, as they are generally called, are far more numerous than male chanters. It must be remarked in passing, that every *geisha* can chant one or two acts of some famous drama or other.

Besides professional chanters, there are numerous amateur chanters throughout Japan. Among various circles of people, the chanting of the epical dramas has been popular from of old. They assiduously take lessons in the art from profes-

sional chanters. Indeed in every town, every village, and every hamlet, there are found some people who make it their chief pastime to chant the dramas. It is no exaggeration to say that some passages of the *Asagao Banashi* and of the *Taikō-ki* are as familiar to any adult person as the national anthem.

In connection with the general prevalence of the chanting of the epical dramas, there is another noteworthy fact which must not be lost sight of. That is to say, the paramount position they have occupied in social education. It will be remembered that higher education in feudal Japan ~~was~~ confined to a portion of the community, *i. e.*, the *samurai* and the priests. The common education carried on in the *terakoya*, primitive elementary schools, was far from satisfactory. Yet, in spite of such poor means of education, the people at large were alive with patriotic sentiments, and fully understood the duties of loyalty and filial piety, and the other moral principles of *bushidō*. All this was due to some special educational organs which made up for the imperfections of school education. That is to say, the theatres, story-tellers, and *gidayū* chanters were so many



Mr Settsu Daijō, the most famous drama chanter (or he left)

powerful educators. It was especially the case with the epical dramas, particularly historical dramas, such as *The Battle of Ichinotani*, *The Treason of Mitsuhide*, and *The Sendai-Ilagi*, in which the principles of *bushidō* are preached most eloquently through the mouths of the characters. Thus, some of the epical dramas were, so to speak, the text-books of *bushidō*, for the common classes of the Yedo Period. Nobody can deny the epical dramas and their chanters the honour of having been ~~important~~ agents of social education.

~~Gidayū~~ chanters, both professional and amateur, ~~when they chant in public, wear kataginu (a sort of cape) and hakama (like a pair of loose trousers),~~ and sit in a respectful attitude before a *kendai*, or bookstand, on which a book containing the text printed in large characters is placed. Then, with their hands on their laps, and with all their energy concentrated on their abdomens, they chant forth loudly and musically to the accompaniment of the *samisen*. The chanter himself often plays the instrument, while he chants the drama. But more frequently, other hands play the instrument. A chanter combines in himself an opera singer and an elocutionist; and it may safely be said that

a unique form of elocution was developed in Japan as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Satsuma Jōun the chanter was at the height of his popularity.

Thus the epical dramas, as pieces to be chanted, and to be used for theatres, and as literature to be read, have an everlasting future before them.

A Marionette Performance



A scene from *O-Somé and Hisamatsu*

Marionette Performances



A scene from *The Sunda-Hagi*



A scene from *The Sekitori Senryō Nobori*

Marionette Performances

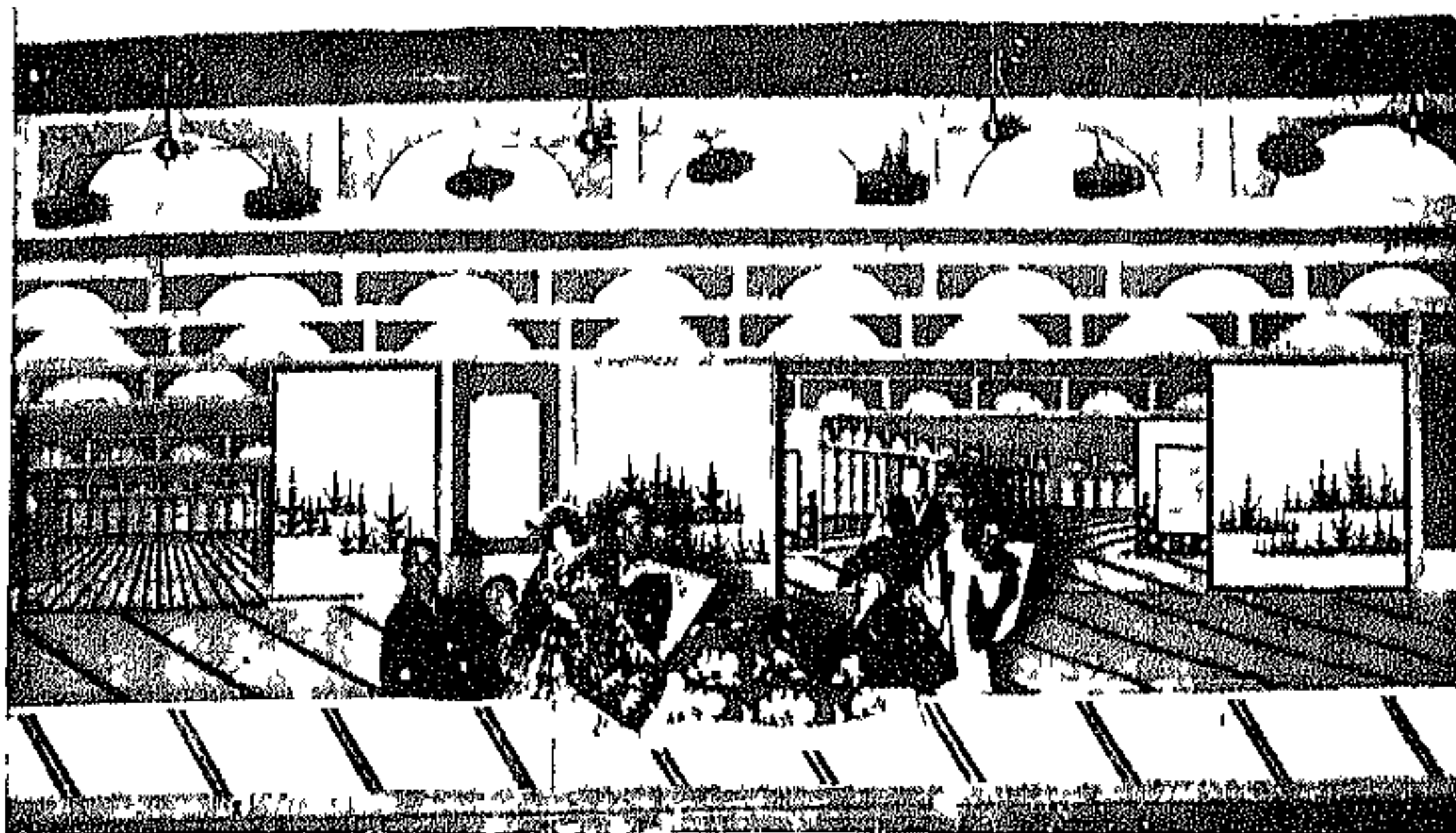


A scene from *The Taikō-Ki*

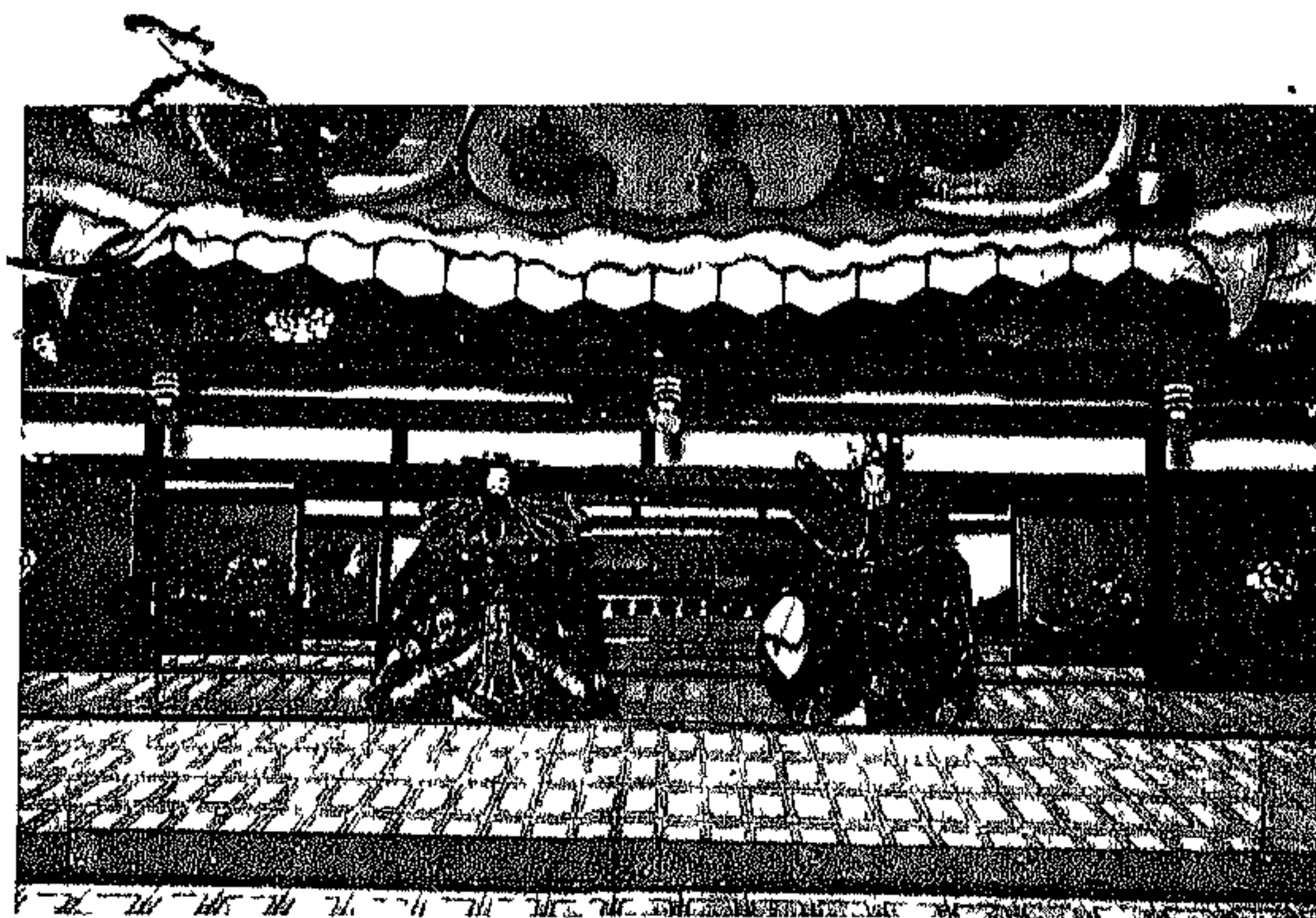


A scene from *The Gotaihetki Shiraishibanashi*

Marionette Performances



A scene from *Yūgiri and Izayemon*



A scene from *The Kokusenya*

The Love of Komachi the Poetess

From

*The Ono-no-Komachi Miyako no
Toshidama*

By

Ki-no-Kaion

The Love of Komachi the Poetess

I



OMACHI, the daughter of Ono-no-Yoshizané, the Lord of Dewa, was the most beautiful woman that Japan has ever produced. She was a remarkably talented poetess, and her name is familiar to everybody in connection with the famous anthology *Hyaku-Nin-Isshyu*, or "Single Verses by a Hundred Poets."

In her younger days, Komachi was courted by a large number of noblemen and *samurai*. Two of these suitors were consumed with a burning passion for her. One was Fukakusa-no-Shōshō Arihira, a court noble, who was a handsome and accomplished gentleman. He had written the maiden many letters; but to his great mortification, she had not replied so much as a single line. It must be remarked *en passant* that she had never seen Arihira, though he had had frequent opportunities to catch a glimpse of her.

Her other passionate adorer was Ōtomo-no-Kuronushi, who was also a nobleman, and well skilled as a poet. He was a haughty, overbearing, and unsympathetic man; and was so enamoured of the young lady that he was determined to attain his purpose, even if he had to resort to violence.

One beautiful spring day, Komachi, accompanied by two or three of her maids, went to Mt. Ōhara to view the cherry-blossoms. When Arihira heard of this, he made up his mind to also visit the mountain *incognito* with a man-servant. By so doing he hoped to find a chance of pleading his cause in person.

Komachi was so charmed with the beautiful blossoms, and the sweet songs of the birds, that her muse became inspired, and she burst forth into verse. She resolved to write her poem on a piece of paper, and tie it to a branch of the cherry-tree, as is often the custom with Japanese poets. She ordered one of her maids to give her a pen and paper, but there was no ink. The young poetess was filled with sorrow, and she quietly complained about this omission. Arihira, who had been an unseen observer of the scene, at this moment walked up to her.

Mr. Sōnosuké



Mr. Sōnosuké as *Lady Komachi*

"Fair lady, pardon me for addressing you without an introduction," said he, bowing politely. "You seem to be in need of ink. I have some here. You are quite welcome to make use of it."

Komachi was greatly delighted at receiving such a kind offer from a handsome and distinguished-looking man. She accepted his ink with many blushes and hearty thanks. She wrote her poem, and after reading it over carefully, handed it to one of her maids. Arihira asked to be allowed the privilege of reading the poem before it was hung on to a branch of the cherry-tree. She consented modestly, and he read it several times, praising it highly. Then he went aside, and taking a small slip of paper, wrote something on it very earnestly. He then returned to her, and handed her what he had written.

"Here is my poem, fair lady," he said, glancing at her with a significant but self-conscious look. "Of course there is no comparison between my poem and yours; but I earnestly hope that you will appreciate the spirit in which it was written."

She received the paper, and unsuspectingly looked over it, expecting to find some beautiful poem; but she was astonished to read an ardent

love-letter, bearing the signature of Fukakusa-no-Shōshō Arihira! Was he the man who had so often written to her? It was not that she had felt no sympathy for the love-sick suitor. She had ignored his letters because it was contrary to womanly modesty to become unduly intimate with a man without first receiving her father's permission. She was glad to think that Arihira was not offended at her seeming cold-heartedness, and had that day followed her. She felt almost inclined to unbosom herself to him; but she suddenly remembered that she was the daughter of a *daimyo*. If she committed a rash or thoughtless act, the good name of her family, and the reputation of her father might be compromised.

With these thoughts Kōmachi abruptly excused herself, and began to retire to her resting-place, which was surrounded with curtains. But Arihira caught her by the long, flowing sleeve of her dress and poured into her ears eloquent words of love.

"If you refuse, you will send me to my death," he concluded with tears. "Give me your sympathy, dear lady!"

"Lord Arihira," she answered tenderly, "your appreciation gives me great pleasure. But if I

consent to your proposal without my father's permission, I shall be branded as a shameless girl. That was my only reason for not answering your numerous kind letters. Please pardon my seeming indifference."

"Excuse me if I interrupt you, my lady," broke in Arihira's servant, "but you need have no fears about that. I am sure your father will readily consent to my lord's proposal. Lord Arihira is descended from the illustrious Lord Kamatari, and he himself is a court noble of high rank. Your ladyship's consent is the only thing now necessary. Do not cause disappointment to my lord."

"Well," said she, blushing like a beautiful red rose, "if my father grants his permission, how can I refuse? If he gives his consent, I shall willingly be yours, Lord Arihira. But my beloved mother died during my childhood, and tomorrow is the thirteenth anniversary of her death. So I have taken a vow that I shall fast and pray for her soul for a hundred days, of which the first is tomorrow. Will you kindly wait until I have completed the fulfilment of my vow?"

"Willingly, my lady," answered Arihira, filled

with an ecstasy of joy, "but I cannot stay at home in idleness for such a long time as a hundred days. I will not press you to see me before your vow has been fulfilled, but may I not sometimes hear your sweet voice? Please allow me to come in secret to your gate every night. Always remember to keep your word, and come to me after the completion of your vow, my dearest lady."

"You can depend upon me, Lord Arihira."

II

THE prime councillor of Komachi's father, who was named Godai Chikatada, had a sister named U-noha. She was a blooming damsel of sixteen summers, and was noted for her beauty and intelligence. One night she received instructions from her brother to go and pay her respects to Lady Komachi. She obeyed his wishes, and Lady Komachi was very pleased at receiving her call. They both talked unreservedly on various topics.

“By the bye,” said U-noha, “as I was walking up to your gate this evening, I was startled to see someone suspiciously concealed in your carriage, which was standing near the entrance. I felt inclined to go up and demand who it was. But I hesitated to do so, because I thought that he must be the lover of one of your maids, and I did not wish to be so cruel as to prevent their secret meeting. I therefore pretended not to see him and walked in,”—as she said this she smiled mischievously,—“I suppose it was one of your maids

in the midst of a clandestine but sweet love affair. How I envy her!"

"Hush, U-noha!" said Komachi blushing. "I see that I must confess the truth to you, but I must ask you to promise not to tell your brother. The man you saw hiding in the carriage is Lord Arihira."

She then told all that had passed between herself and her lover.

"Lord Arihira has promised to come secretly every night to my gate, during my hundred days of fasting and prayer." As she continued her face became wreathed with smiles. "So the man in the carriage must have been he. He is a very kind and trustworthy man. The period of fasting and prayer is nearly at an end. The day will soon come when Lord Arihira will openly ask my father for my hand in marriage. Be thankful, dear girl; when I am Lady Arihira, I will find you a handsome husband."

"You must indeed be happy," said U-noha, her brow suddenly darkening. "I congratulate you! Your intentions are kind, but it is not suitable for a girl to choose for herself a handsome husband. I must put up with an ill-favoured man. I don't

rightly know the reason, but your happy story has made me feel dizzy and heavy-hearted. Will you excuse me if I retire, my lady?"

With these words U-noha went into the next room. Truth to tell, the maiden had long cherished a secret passion for Arihira, and had written him many a letter, but he had sent her no answer. That was not surprising; for Arihira had been too absorbed in his love for Komachi to pay any attention to the courtship of a comparatively unknown girl. If Komachi continued to be his sweetheart, U-noha might long for him for ever in vain. She realized that the situation was helpless, and she wept bitterly with despair. After a while she thought of a plan. She thought that if Lord Arihira was still hiding in the carriage, she would meet him, and confide her feelings to him. She would also complain, as much as she wished, of his cold-heartedness, and afterwards would try to abandon her hopeless love. Having made up her mind thus, she was about to leave the room, but as she reached the door, she trembled and turned faint, being overcome with maidenly timidity.

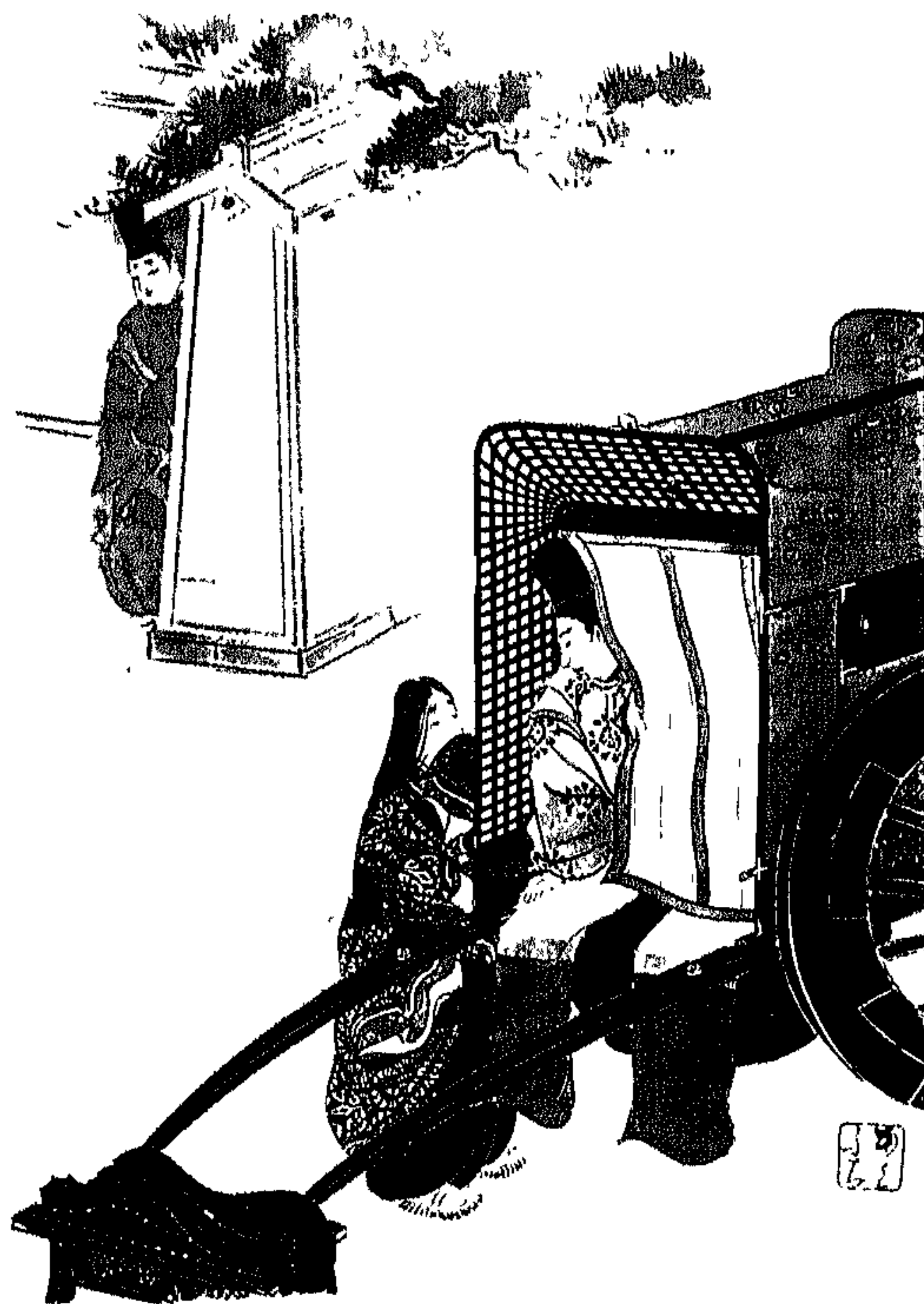
Looking around her, she saw on the family altar a bottle of *saké*, which had been put there as an

offering to the deities of poetry. She remembered that people had told her that the liquor stimulated one's courage; and taking down the bottle, she desperately drank two or three cupsfuls. Then taking the bottle with its remaining contents in her hand, the love-sick girl stole out of the chamber to give it to Arihira, who was in the carriage.

But the man in the carriage was not really Arihira. He was Ōtomo-no-Kuronushi, the other passionate adorer of Komachi, lying in wait to take Arihira's life. When he had found out about the intimacy existing between the couple, he had been filled with a burning anger and jealousy. After some consideration, he came to the desperate resolution to make away with his rival, and make Komachi a "jewel in his own hand." U-noha was utterly ignorant of this; and emboldened by *saké*, she groped her way towards the carriage.

"Lord Arihira! Lord Arihira!" she exclaimed in a whisper. "Oh! He is asleep! Lord Arihira, you will take cold if you sleep here in this cold weather."

The would-be assassin awoke from his slumber and cried out in terrified tones:



"It is I, sir," answered the girl, disguising her voice

"Who are you?"

"It is I, sir," answered the girl, disguising her voice. "Lord Arihira, don't you know your promised wife?"

"Are you Lady Komachi?" asked Kuronushi, in pleased surprise.

"I am," she answered. "It is very cold to-night, so I've brought you some *saké*. Will you drink it, my dear lord?"

"Many thanks. I cannot tell you how glad I am to meet you, my dearest," returned the other in a feigned voice.

U-noha stepped into the carriage and handed the *saké* to the supposed Arihira. Both were in an ecstasy of joy, being under the sweet delusion of having each met their lovers. They kissed and fondled each other, and the *saké* soon after taking effect, they fell asleep.

In the meantime Arihira had as usual stealthily approached the gate, and hearing the sound of whispers in the carriage, paused with bated breath. He feared that the sound of his footsteps might break the spell of some young lovers' secret meeting. At that moment there were sounds of footsteps approaching the gate. Fearing discovery,

Arihira softly climbed into a branch of a great pine tree, which was growing near the wall. Soon one of Kuronushi's retainers appeared, and walked up to the carriage.

"My lord! My lord!" he called softly. "Have you killed him already?"

"No, not yet," whispered Kuronushi, waking, "but never mind, the next best thing has happened, for Lady Komachi is in my power. She is now sound asleep in this carriage. It is dark, so if you will help me to carry her to my house, no one will see us."

"Good, my lord! Let us make haste," said the retainer, stepping into the carriage. "Lady Komachi! Lady Komachi! Please wake!"

The girl awoke, and the sleep having sobered her, she was filled with regret at having pretended to be her young mistress. She was overcome with shame at the mean deed she had committed.

"I am ashamed of myself, Lord Arihira!" she stammered. "I am not Lady Komachi. I am U-noha. I have longed for many a day to gain the love of your lordship. Pray forgive me, my dear lord!"

On hearing this confession, both Kuronushi and

his retainer were struck dumb with astonishment.

The disappointed nobleman reflected for a moment, and then thought of the following terrible plan. He determined that he would sacrifice the life of the poor girl, and lay the crime of murder upon his rival.

He suddenly drew his dirk from its sheath, and stabbed U-noha to the heart, and signalling to his retainer, they both disappeared in an instant. The girl fell to the ground, shrieking in her death agony; and Arihira, greatly amazed, jumped down and ran to her assistance.

"Help! Help!" he cried. "Murder! Murder!"

Chikatada, U-noha's brother, and several of his retainers were startled at hearing the maiden's cries, and rushed to the scene. When he saw his sister's dead body, he was exceedingly astonished, and wondered who could be the murderer. Frantic with grief, he looked around him, and when he saw Arihira standing at the wall, trembling with emotion, he naturally concluded that he must be the murderer. Drawing his sword, he rushed up to the nobleman, roaring:

"Coward! You shall taste the sharpness of my blade of revenge!"

Arihira started back, pleaded his innocence, and gave an account of what he had observed whilst concealed in the tree. But the *samurai* was too excited to listen to his explanation. Fortunately at that moment Sadakagé, Arihira's chief retainer, came and profusely pleaded for his master.

"Your sorrow is natural," he said, "but I wish to save my master from the infamous charge of murder. Please place his life in my hands for three days. Within that time I will surely search for the offender, and deliver him to you. Pray grant my request, sir."

After Sadakagé had finished speaking, Komachi's father Yoshizané came, and asserted that Lord Arihira was such a man of refinement that he could not have killed a young maiden. He also persuaded Chikatada to comply with Sadakagé's earnest request. But Chikatada added that if the real offender did not appear within the stipulated period, he would take Arihira's life.

III

A SEVERE drought had been over the land for several weeks. The earth was parched, rivers were dried up, and rice and all the other crops were ruined. Everyone, from the Emperor downward, prayed to Heaven and Earth, the gods of the sea and the river, for rain; but not a single drop fell. If the drought should continue for a few days more famine and starvation would prevail throughout Japan.

When the Emperor heard of this, he ordered the Prime Minister to induce the poets to offer verses to the god of rain. In those days people believed that a pre-eminently excellent poem could move Heaven and Earth, the gods and evil spirits. If a wonderfully beautiful poem was offered to the Ryūjin or the Dragon-god, he would be so moved that rain would fall immediately. In compliance with the Imperial Order, the Prime Minister summoned many poets to meet on the Hirozawa Pond, in which the Dragon-god dwelt. The Minister presided, and Ki-no-Tsurayuki, the poet laureate,

acted as judge and reciter. All those who had won a certain amount of fame as versemakers: court nobles, high officials, *samurai*, and ladies attended the meeting.

The haughty poet Kuronushi was the first to offer his poem. The judge read it aloud with great respect. It was a commonplace composition, both in words and sentiments; but Tsurayuki made a complimentary remark about it. Kuronushi looked around triumphantly at all the poets. "I don't wish to sound conceited, friends," he said, "but I am bound to say that I consider my poem a perfect one. I am sure that in virtue of it rain will presently fall. Pray look at the sky! It is already darkening! Clouds are gathering! Have you ordered your servants to bring some protection against the rain, friends?"

At Kuronushi's impudent words, all present looked at one another with bitter smiles. At this moment Arihira's retainer, Sadakagô, who was present, suddenly walked up to Kuronushi, and all were astonished to hear him say brusquely:

"Excuse me, sir, but are you quite sure that that poem is your own composition? I fancy it is an ancient one, isn't it, sir?"

"What insolence!" cried Kuronushi, flushing angrily. "Apologize to me immediately, or you will not live another moment!"

"Then are you sure," asked Sadakagé again, quite undaunted, "it is your own work, sir?"

"Whose else can it be, insolent wretch?" cried Kuronushi, his rage increasing.

At this assurance, Sadakagé beckoned to Chikatada to approach and said, "I have no doubt whatever, my friend, that this Kuronushi is the murderer of your sister U-noha."

Chikatada, hearing these words, sprang at Kuronushi, and cried: "Enemy of my sister! I can never forgive you the wrong you have done me!" and he seized him without a moment's hesitation.

"The enemy of your sister?" said Kuronushi, turning as pale as death. "Nonsense! You are mad!"

The Prime Minister ordered silence, and addressed Sadakagé with great dignity.

"Did I understand you to say that Lord Kuronushi has killed Chikatada's sister? That's strange! Can you substantiate your accusation?"

"We deserve punishment for disturbing this

sacred meeting, your Excellency," answered Sadakagé, bowing to the Minister, "but I think we have indisputable evidence. To tell the truth, this crime was committed from motives of jealousy in love. Lord Kuronushi secretly killed Chikata's sister, intending to lay his crime on his rival Lord Arihira, my master, in order to attain his base wishes. When we examined the unfortunate maiden's garments, we found among them a poem written on a piece of beautiful paper, which was evidently prepared for today's meeting. I have it here, your Excellency. We concluded that the writer of this poem must be the murderer, and therefore expected to find him at this meeting. The poem by Lord Kuronushi which was read just now was exactly the same as the one we found in U-noha's clothes, and I have therefore judged him to be the culprit. I hope that your Excellency will agree with the truth of my judgment."

The Minister compared the two poems, and on examining them both carefully, found that they were word for word the same, not only in construction, but also the handwriting was identical in every detail. He was greatly astonished, and

said that it was a heinous crime for a nobleman of high rank to murder an innocent maiden, merely in order to lay the offence on another man. He also said that he would report the matter to the Emperor, after which the criminal's punishment would be decided. The scoundrel was promptly delivered to the police, who took him away to prison.

Then the Prime Minister ordered the "poetry meeting" to be continued. Many poets, in rapid succession, offered their verses to the Dragon-god, but there was no response.

All present were downcast with regret and disappointment, and had almost given up hope when Lady Komachi walked gracefully forward, and offered her poem with modest words. The Poet Laureate had scarcely finished reading it aloud, when black clouds suddenly covered the sky, and rain poured in torrents, reviving all the withered vegetation. The Prime Minister was filled with intense joy. He praised the poetess with enthusiasm, and declared that she should receive a munificent reward from the Emperor. Then the meeting was closed, and he hastened to the Imperial Palace to report the matter to the Mikado.

IV

THE next day Kuronushi was deprived of his rank and title, his estate and property were confiscated, and his retainers banished from the capital. But the criminal's proper punishment was deferred to a later date, his present punishment being only a preliminary step.

One day Komachi and her father Yoshizano received a summons to the Imperial Palace, where the Emperor conferred upon her the dignity of court lady, and created her Poetess Laureate in recognition of the wonderful miracle she had achieved. Both father and daughter were filled with gratitude. Soon after the ceremony was over the Emperor summoned the Prime Minister to him, and told him that owing to his advanced age he intended shortly to abdicate in favour of the Crown Prince Hanateru. Komachi, who was gifted with great intelligence, and who was a supremely beautiful woman, was selected to be the Prince's bride. The wedding was to take place in a very short time, and she was to make the Palace her

home until the final arrangements were completed. When the Minister had heard the Imperial command, he communicated it to Yoshizané and Komachi. The father almost wept for gratitude, and telling his daughter to stay, left the Court, in an ecstasy of joy.

When she was left alone, Komachi fell into a reverie. It was the greatest honour to her to have been appointed Crown Princess, but it was impossible for her to break her vows with Lord Arihira. Although she had not yet asked her father's permission for the marriage, she already considered herself his wife. Therefore, although she had received a command from the Emperor, she could not desert Arihira without violating her duty as a virtuous woman. On the other hand, how could she disobey the Imperial command? She was indeed in a dreadful dilemma. Only one thing remained for her to do, and that was to take her own life.

With this resolve Komachi unsheathed her dirk with fast falling tears, and she said to herself with a sigh: "I wish I could see my beloved Arihira and father before I die." She raised her hand and was about to plunge the dirk into her throat,

when just at the critical moment, someone suddenly seized her hands and prevented her from doing the fearful deed. She looked around, and to her surprise and pleasure, she saw her lover Arihira. He had that day been summoned to the Court on duty, and on hearing of Komachi's appointment as Crown Princess had sought for her to talk with her. They gazed at each other for a few moments, dumb with emotion. Then Komachi, with many tears, told Arihira what had happened to her, and the reason why she had attempted suicide. When he heard her words, Arihira was overcome with admiration and gratitude, but he said with assumed composure:

"I am indeed thankful to hear of your faithfulness to me, my dearest, but I cannot bear to see you kill yourself for my sake, and you must not disobey the Imperial command. The only course open to you is to give me up, and try and enjoy the pomp and luxury of the life of a Crown Princess. Of course I release you from all your vows, and am willing to withdraw my own. Farewell, my dear Komachi."

As he spoke, Arihira prepared to depart; but Komachi clung to his sleeve, and wept bitterly, saying:

"Your words are unkind, Lord Arihira! I cannot, as I live, give you up. Do not say such cruel things again!"

"Your devotion touches me to the heart, my dearest. I must confess that my words were only to persuade you to abandon your idea of killing yourself. I promise you that I will keep my vows for ever. But our determination makes it impossible for us to stay here any longer. We must fly to some remote place without delay. Let us go at once!"

"Do you really mean me to go with you, Lord Arihira?"

"Yes. Make haste and come now."

Fortunately no one was near, so the lovelorn couple stole unnoticed from the Palace.

V

WHEN Komachi and Arihira had stolen out of the Palace, they ran aimlessly hand in hand to the suburbs. Thence, in order to evade pursuit, they chose unfrequented places. They wandered along all the night through. Sometimes they lost themselves in the densely wooded forest, at other times they stumbled among endless rows of tombstones, until at dawn they found themselves quite exhausted at Arashiyama. There they saw a cottage which was evidently the dwelling of a Buddhist priest living a solitary life of devotion. They dragged their weary footsteps to the door, in order to ask for shelter and a little rest. They knocked, and the door was opened by a young priest, who as soon as he saw them said wonderingly:

“How glad I am to see you, my lord and lady! May I ask what has brought you to such a lonely place?”

The lovers looked at the priest's face, and were surprised and pleased to recognize in him a man

whose life they had saved on the occasion of their picnic to Mount Ōhara. It was on that day that they had exchanged their love-vows. They therefore freely confided in him, and told him the whole story of their unfortunate love affairs, and how they had exchanged vows of eternal fidelity. They also told how Komachi's poem had caused rain to fall at the "poetry-meeting," in consequence of which she had been appointed Crown Princess. They gave an account of their elopement, and begged the priest earnestly to protect and shelter them for the time being. The priest promptly and willingly consented, saying:

"Willingly, my lord and lady. I will do anything in my power to help you. You can stay here as long as you choose. But I am afraid the accommodation is very inconvenient. However, in such an out-of-the-way place you will be safe from all pursuers. But you must eat, for you are sure to be consumed with hunger. I will run to the village and get you some food. Please rest in the inner room until I return."

With these words the priest went out. Komachi and Arihira, feeling greatly relieved, walked in, and settled down to rest in the inner room.

A little while later they were startled by the sounds of some men walking into the cottage. They hesitatingly peeped through the chinks of the *shōji*, and were amazed to see many men with their faces muffled with kerchiefs, and looking like outlaws.

"Bring us some cups of tea," cried the ruffians.

The young couple feared that immediate danger might follow, if the outlaws should catch a glimpse of their faces, and did not dare to come out. They answered timidly:

"The priest to whom this cottage belongs is out, and so pray help yourselves to tea or hot water, as much as you please, sirs."

"As much as we please!" cried the ruffians. "What insolence! If you are in charge of the house, why don't you come out and greet us? Well, we will boil the water and make some tea for ourselves."

With these words they stepped noisily up the mats, and sliding open the *shōji*, looked at the terrified pair.

"Ha! Ha! Here are the eloping couple, Komachi and Arihira," they cried triumphantly. "We are delighted to see you. We are the retain-

ers of Lord Kuronushi. It was owing to your interference that our lord was deprived of his rank and title, and thrown into prison. We disguised ourselves as outlaws and have searched for you in order to catch you. You have eloped in violation of the Imperial command, and if we capture you and take you back we shall obtain our lord's pardon. Fortune has favoured us, and delivered you into our hands."

As they spoke, they bound Komachi and Arihira hand and foot, and were just about to depart for the capital with them, when the priest returned. The priest, who had formerly been a *samurai*, and was very proficient in military arts, and possessed Herculean strength, was not in the least alarmed at this state of affairs. He rushed up to the *butsudan* or family Buddhist shrine, and taking from it a great sword, cut and hewed at the ruffians. They were terrified at the remarkable strength of his strokes and immediately fled in all directions.

The priest cut the frightened captives free from their bonds and said:

"As your whereabouts have been discovered, it is dangerous for you to stay here longer. You

must fly for your lives at once. If you go along the north side of the valley you will reach Saga. I will stay here for some time, and delay any enemies who may be pursuing you, and afterwards I will overtake you; but you must hasten immediately."

Urged by the priest, the young lovers fled along the road he had suggested.

After they had gone, the priest fought bravely against the rallying foes and succeeded in repulsing them. He then began to make preparations to start after his new friends, when Komachi's retainer Chikatada and Arihira's retainer Sadakagé came to the convent accompanied by their master and mistress. They had met them in the mountain some distance off, and having heard of the priest's kindness to them had come back to thank him and consult with him as to what they had better do next. After a consultation, they decided to visit a certain temple which was situated in Mount Atago, and beg the abbot to shelter Komachi and Arihira.

With this intention the party left for the temple.

VI

SOON afterwards the Emperor abdicated, and Prince Hanateru ascended the throne. Amnesty was proclaimed to commemorate the occurrence, and consequently the capital sentence which had been pronounced upon Kuronushi was remitted, and he was not only pardoned, but his former rank and title were restored to him. But this grace was not extended to Lord Arihira and Lady Komachi, who were considered violators of the Imperial command. No one ventured to entreat for their pardon. Thus the young lovers were like plants growing in the shade without any chance of blooming forth in the sun. They continued to live a dreary and secluded life in Mount Atago.

There was a rumour at that time that a goblin frequently appeared in the Imperial Palace. Sometimes it summoned up tremendous peals of thunder and sometimes it appeared in the form of a woman with hideous features. When it appeared, the nobles and ministers of state were

frightened, and the Emperor was filled with terror. The Emperor therefore sent for two famous priests of Mount Hiei and ordered them to pray, so that the goblin might be subdued. So that same day they began to offer up earnest prayers. The goblin immediately appeared before them in the shape of a woman, and said angrily:

"Alas! ye foolish priests; no matter how fervently ye may pray, my hatred will never be pacified." With these words, the phantom vanished, and suddenly lurid lightning flashed, and deafening peals of thunder rolled around.

The priests, however, were undaunted, and continued their earnest prayers, holding their rosaries in their hands. The ghostly woman appeared again, and they asked her reproachfully:

"Woman, whose spirit are you, and what is the cause of your hatred? Why can you not resort to some other method of showing your resentment? How do you dare to cause annoyance to his Imperial Majesty?"

The spectre sobbed bitterly and said, "I am the spirit of U-noha, who was cruelly murdered by Kuronushi. He is not only a heinous scoundrel,

but has committed the foul crime of murder, and yet he has not only been pardoned, but has been restored to his former rank and position. But why was the Imperial favour not extended to Lord Arihira and Lady Komachi? They have committed no offence whatever. It is terribly unjust. Therefore I carry a grudge in my heart against the Imperial Court, and have endeavoured to terrify them by causing spectres frequently to appear."

"Komachi and Arihira have committed no offence?" retorted the priests. "They have committed the great crime of disobeying the ex-Emperor's command and eloping together!"

"No, you are mistaken," exclaimed the spectre. "Both Lady Komachi and Lord Arihira had exchanged vows of eternal fidelity, long before the ex-Emperor appointed her Crown Princess. They were only waiting for their wedding. So, although they had commands from the Emperor, they could not break their vows without violating their duties as a faithful man, and a virtuous woman. Their step was quite unavoidable, and therefore was not a crime. Their only course was to steal out of the palace, and run away.

If any one is to blame, it is the ex-Emperor. He forcibly appointed a betrothed woman to be the Crown Prince's consort."

The priests had no reply to offer to this indisputable argument. They admitted its justice, and promised the ghost to inform the Emperor of all that had passed. This entirely satisfied the ghost, and it vanished.

The priests at once went to the Imperial presence, and told the Emperor of what they had heard. The Emperor was immediately convinced of his error.

"Then," said he, "Komachi and Arihira have not committed the crime of adultery. I will order them to be immediately recalled to the capital, and will publicly make them man and wife, and restore them to their former positions. I also decree that the spirit of U-noha shall be deified in the Kamo Shrino."

The Emperor's commands were carried out, and the ghost ceased to haunt the court.

The Treason of Mitsuhide

From

The Yehon Taikō-Ki

By

Chikamatsu Yanagi

The Treason of Mitsuhide

I



TOWARD the end of the sixteenth century there lived a brave warrior named Akéchi Mitsuhide. He was in the service of Oda Nobunaga, under whose command he distinguished himself in several battles. In appreciation of his exploits, General Nobunaga conferred on him extensive fiefs in the provinces of Tamba and Ōmi, and created him one of the chief *daimios*. He was so grateful for his promotion, that he served his prince with even greater loyalty than before.

Nobunaga had been born a lesser *daimio* in the province of Owari, during the Dark Age of Japanese history. He had subjugated almost all the powerful chieftains in the different provinces who were contending against one another, and restored peace and order throughout the greater part of the Empire. The Emperor thereupon appointed him Minister of the Right, in recognition

of his achievement. He never assumed the title of Shogun, but he practically ruled Japan in the name of the Emperor.

Notwithstanding his valour and sagacity, Nobunaga was hot-tempered, arrogant, and capricious, and often resorted to violence and despotism. Mitsuhide deeply deplored this, and frequently remonstrated with his prince. But, as the proverb says, "Faithful advice sounds harsh to the ear," Nobunaga was offended at his loyal retainer's suggestions, and began to keep him at a distance. Another reason made the estrangement of lord and retainer even more pronounced. There was a handsome youth named Mori Rammaru, a favourite page of Nobunaga. He happened to harbour ill feelings towards Mitsuhide in consequence of a dispute about their fiefs. This young man therefore lost no opportunity of slandering Mitsuhide to Nobunaga, who gradually came to look upon Mitsuhide with greater and greater hatred, until at last he thought of dismissing his loyal retainer. But Mitsuhide served his master with such unswerving loyalty, and obeyed any of his commands, however unreasonable, without showing any signs of discontent, that Nobunaga

was at a loss to find any ground for discharging him.

It happened that Nobunaga's eldest son, Nobutada, was promoted in his official rank. Therefore an Imperial messenger bearing the writ of appointment was sent to Nobunaga's castle at Azuchi on Lake Biwa. Nobunaga commanded Mitsuiké and Rammaru to receive and feast the envoy. Mitsuiké, who was well-versed in etiquette, took the whole responsibility of the affair upon his shoulders, and was assiduously engaged in making the necessary arrangements. Rammaru was displeased with this, and watched for an opportunity to pick a quarrel with him. The time drew near for the honourable guest's entertainment, and Mitsuiké and his son, Jūjirō, were busy giving orders for the banquet. The former was quite unsuspecting of what was passing in Rammaru's mind. Suddenly Rammaru walked up to him, and asked angrily: "I think it is very strange that you are making all the arrangements without consulting me. Why do you never ask my opinion? If you don't give me a satisfactory explanation, I shall take steps against you."

"Oh, don't take it amiss, Rammaru," replied Mitsuhidé, looking up with surprise. "How can I take much notice of you? The time for the banquet is drawing near, and I am busy attending to my duties."

"Silence! We were both appointed to the office of feasting the Imperial envoy. You behave as if you were the sole officer. I consider that is a personal insult. I suppose you think me a useless nuisance! You are an arrogant old wretch!"

Rammaru was not satisfied with this, so he heaped gross abuse on Mitsuhidé. At last the latter lost his patience and flew into a passion.

"You are an insolent youngster," he roared, clapping his hand on the hilt of his sword. "Speak another word, and it shall be your last!"

Rammaru was not daunted at this, and he crossed to Mitsuhidé, saying: "Kill me if you can!" and they were on the point of cutting at each other, when the *fusuma*, or sliding paper partition, was suddenly slid open and Nobunaga appeared on the scene.

He rushed at Mitsuhidé, and, seizing him by the collar of his *kimono*, held him on to the floor,

crying: "You are insolent to protest against Rammaru's words. His authority is as great as my own. Wretch! Beat him on the face, Rammaru! Be quick! Quick!"

On hearing this peremptory order, Rammaru uplifted an iron fan which he chanced to carry in his hand.

"This is my lord's command," he cried, beating MitsuhiKé on the forehead with it. His blows were so violent that the other's head was bruised, and his eyes were blinded with the flowing blood. But MitsuhiKé bore the pain with great fortitude, compressing his lips and drawing in his cheeks. Nobunaga looked into his face with a sarcastic smile.

"How do you like it, MitsuhiKé? Don't Rammaru's blows fill you with resentment? He is chastising you in my stead, and at my commands."

"I feel no such resentment, my lord," replied MitsuhiKé calmly. "My life is devoted to the service of your lordship. If my bones are crushed, or my flesh mangled by your wishes, I shall never utter complaints against you. My obligations to you are too great. But my sorrow is unbounded when I hear people call you a cruel, unfeeling

general. I feel that it is my duty to tell you this frankly!"—he burst into tears—"It is my earnest hope and prayer, that your lordship should change your ways, and be generally esteemed as a benevolent ruler. If you do so, you should leave a lasting fame to posterity. Oh, do not ignore my words, my dear lord."

This speech only enraged Nobunaga the more.

"Stop!" he roared. "Your insolence is intolerable. Henceforth you will be refused audience. Leave me at once! Come, Rammaru, turn Mitsuhidé and his son out of the gate!"

"If you hesitate to go any longer," cried Rammaru, threateningly, "I will kick you out!"

Mitsuhidé made no reply. He pressed his hand to his wounded forehead and departed ruefully with his son, who was weeping bitterly.

II

MITSUHIKÉ returned home sadly with his son. His wife, Misao, and his chief retainer Shiōden met them at the porch. Misao was astonished to see the bruises on her husband's forehead.

"You look pale and dispirited, my dear," said she, "and how did you get that ugly wound on your forehead?"

Mitsuhidé did not reply, being wrapped in thought. Jūjirō, whose mind was also deeply preoccupied, raised his drooping head and gave an account of what had happened. How Mitsuhidé had been insulted by Rammaru, on the occasion of the Imperial messenger's entertainment; how Nobunaga had ordered Rammaru to beat him on the forehead, and how both father and son had been driven out of the castle.

Misao was overcome with grief at hearing this, and her thoughts instantly passed on to the future of her husband. But the fiery Shiōden could not remain passive. He said nothing, but flushed

with anger rushed silently out of the house. Misao bade him stop.

"Where are you going?" she asked. "What are you going to do, Shiōden?"

"An ancient sage says, 'When one's master is insulted, one fights to the death.' I will break into the castle, even if I lose my life, and take the head of Rammaru, who has insulted my lord. Do not stop me!"

With these words Shiōden again prepared to run out. Misao caught him by the sleeve.

"Your anger is right," she said. "But if you act rashly, you may bring trouble on your lord and disgrace on our house. Think again, before you act hastily."

Shiōden refused to listen, and shaking her off began to start.

"Stay!" said Mitsuhide reproachfully. "You take too much upon yourself. I gave you no instructions to make such an uproar."

"Why do you stop me, my lord?" said Shiōden excitedly. "Even if you had committed some fault, it would be an unpardonable wrong for you, a *daimio*, governing the two provinces of Tamba and Ōmi, to be beaten. My hatred of Rammaru

knows no bounds! How can I help trying to take vengeance on him? I am determined either to kill Rammaru or myself. Don't stop me, my lord!"

Mitsuhidé looked him full in the face.

"You are mistaken, Shiōden," he said. "Rammaru beat me at my lord's order, so the blame is not his. As you know well, Lord Nobunaga is short-tempered and capricious. It is his custom either to shower favours on his retainers, or beat them, as his caprice chooses. Remember that a retainer has no reason to resent any command of his lord, even if he demand his life. Let that thought calm you, Shiōden."

The hot-tempered warrior had no reply to make to these words. He set his teeth and clenched his fists and remained silent. Suddenly a messenger from Lord Nobunaga arrived. Mitsuhidé and Shiōden met him reverentially at the entrance and begged him to be seated.

"Hashiba Hidōyoshi," he said, "proceeded some time ago to the Central Provinces, and has been engaged in the subjugation of the Mōri family. Therefore his Excellency Lord Nobunaga commands that you, Mitsuhidé, shall hasten

thither to help Hidéyoshi and fight under him to the best of your ability. If your achievement should prove noteworthy, on you shall be conferred the provinces of Izumo and Iwami. In the meantime, you shall be deprived of your fiefs of Tamba and Ōmi. This is the command of his Excellency Lord Nobunaga."

There was a dead silence. Mitsuhidé and Shiōden looked at each other in amazement. Then Mitsuhidé answered that he respectfully accepted the command, and the messenger departed.

Mitsuhidé folded his arms and stood for a few moments buried in reverie. Shiōden was filled with an inexpressible anger.

"What do you think of this command, my lord?" he asked, his hair bristling with wrath. "It is obvious that the merciless Nobunaga intends to destroy you. It is not the time to think of loyalty. Your lordship must raise the banner of chastisement against the cruel tyrant, and conquer Japan, and leave an undying fame to future generations. Such is my earnest wish."

Misao, on hearing these words, approached Mitsuhidé and remonstrated with tears:

"Oh, do not listen to such treasonable words!

The faithful Shiōden's suggestion seems at first to be reasonable. But the mere mention of the idea of killing Lord Nobunaga and usurping the Empire, horrifies and disgusts me! My dear husband, I implore you, do not bring disgrace upon our aged mother and beloved children! Do not entertain such a horrible design. Take some other safe and wise course, such as will secure the good reputation of our house. Never, never come to any such evil resolution!"

Mitsuhiké remained silent. Soon afterwards, however, he recited the following versicle in loud tones, with an expression of firm determination on his face.

"Blind calumny may raise a cry
Of witless traitor—What care I?
I little reck of slander's breath
When my own will foredooms my death."

It is unnecessary to say that by this time Mitsuhiké had resolved to hoist the banner of treason. His wife understood the full significance of his poem, and when she heard it she burst into bitter tears and was stupefied with grief. Shiōden, on the other hand, danced for joy and cried out: "Long live the Akéchi family!"

III

NOBUNAGA and his son Nobutada went to Kyōto to pay homage to the Emperor. Nobutada stayed at the Nijō Castle, and Nobunaga put up at the Honnōji Temple, where he spent some days in enjoyment with his beautiful concubine Ano-no-Tsuboné, his favourite Rammaru, and the latter's younger brother Rikimaru.

One night Ano-no-Tsuboné brought Nobutada's son Sambōshi from the Nijō Castle, and taking the baby in her arms, bore it into Nobunaga's presence. Nobunaga was exceedingly delighted to see his innocent grandson. A feast was immediately given in honour of the child's visit, and Nobunaga ordered the lady to perform a dance. She saluted her lord, and taking a fan in her hand, she rose to her feet, and danced gracefully to the accompaniment of her own voice. Her gay coloured flowing sleeves fluttered in the air, and she looked like a butterfly on the wing. Nobunaga was much delighted, and praised her skill in glowing terms. At the conclusion of her dance, he ordered

Rammaru to serve her with *saké*. Then Nobunaga offered Rammaru a cup, saying that his favourite might ask him for any dish he chose.

"Many thanks, my lord," said Rammaru, with a serious look. "I do not wish for any delicate dish, but may I be so bold as to ask for an army of four or five thousand men?"

"An army?" asked Nobunaga surprised. "For what purpose do you require an army, Rammaru?"

"I intend to march on MitsuhiKé's castle at Kaméyama in Tamba, and overthrow him in a single battle. He is a curse to your lordship, and I wish to rid you of him!"

"That is indeed well said," said Nobunaga smiling. "But that is a needless fear. It would be impossible for such a man as MitsuhiKé to 'strike his lance' against me, who am a hero, governing Japan. Set your mind at ease and fill another cup. '*Saké* is the best broom to sweep away sorrow.' I will join you."

So saying, Nobunaga drained two or three cupfuls in rapid succession. Ano-no-Tsuboné warned him, saying: "'Remissness is a great enemy,' my lord. You would do well to ponder over what Sir Rammaru said just now."

By this time Nobunaga was quite intoxicated.

"You too!" he said, "you are also filled with such useless fears! It is very annoying! I fear my Sambōshi is sleepy.—I have drunk enough. Let us now forget our joys and sorrows in sweet sleep."

As he spoke, he rose to his feet, and retired to the inner chamber, and Ano-no-Tsuboné, with the baby prince in her arms, followed him.

Then Rammaru and all the others retired to their respective rooms, and were soon drowned in sleep.

The night was far advanced, and "even the grasses and trees were wrapt in sleep." The effects of liquor had passed away from Nobunaga's brain, and he could not longer sleep. He got up and slid open the *shōji*. Suddenly he was startled to hear a confused noise of the crows in their roosts in the garden trees. They were flapping and crying in alarm through the dark night. He bent his head in wonder, and the sound of bells and drums smote on his ear from far away. The sounds seemed to draw nearer and nearer. He called to the men on night duty.

"Say! There's danger! Climb to the lookout!"

Hearing the alarm, Ano-no-Tsuboné rushed out with a halberd in her hand. "Rammaru! Rammaru!" she cried. "Here is a great danger to our lord! Look out at once!"

She ran to the entrance of the temple. Rammaru heard her cry and, starting up, rushed up the balcony. He cast his eye round in every direction. The night was black, but from his observations in the darkness he made sure that Mitsuiké's troops were advancing. He ran down and reported it to Nobunaga. "What! Treason on the part of Mitsuiké?" exclaimed Nobunaga in astonishment. "Your warning was wonderfully prophetic. I deeply regret that I did not listen to it. But regrets are useless. Our only course is to defend ourselves as well as possible."

"Yes, that's most important, my lord," answered Rammaru. Unfortunately Nobunaga's retinue numbered scarcely more than three hundred. It was quite impossible for his tiny band to make any headway against a large army. When the lord and retainer thought of this they gnashed their teeth in mortification.

At this moment Rikimaru rushed back from a reconnaissance

"It appears," he cried, "that Mitsuhide has marched against us with a troop of about four thousand men. So we must, all of us, be on our guard."

Rammaru turned to Nobunaga. "Rikimaru and I," he said, "will fight the enemy in front of the gate. In the meantime, I hope that your lordship will be ready to defend yourself with bow and arrows." With these words he and his brother ran out.

Nobunaga sighed bitterly. He realized that there was no fighting against such tremendous odds. He made up his mind to help his grandson to escape, and then to commit suicide. He was just ordering the child to be brought to him when Ano-no-Tsuboné, wounded in several places and carrying the blood-stained halberd, staggered into the room.

"The enemy have already broken through the gate, my lord," said she. "I will go and rejoin the fight. In the meantime, you must make rapid preparations for flight. The sooner you are able to do so, the better, my lord."

"I am grateful to you for your kind words, Tsuboné," said Nobunaga resignedly. "I am, however, fully prepared to die. If I should be killed by an unknown soldier, in an attempt to escape, it would be an everlasting disgrace. But I am troubled about the safety of Sambōshi. I want you to take the child and hasten to Hidéyoshi's camp at Takamatsu, in the province of Bitchū. When you arrive there, tell him to take care of Sambōshi, and to revenge my death on the accursed traitor. I earnestly request you to do this for me."

The lady burst into tears. "Oh, my lord!" she sobbed. "You must forgive me if I disobey your orders. I cannot forsake you on the eve of your death. Permit me to share your fate, dear lord."

But Nobunaga turned a deaf ear to her entreaty, and peremptorily commanded her to leave his presence. At that moment Rammaru came back, after having cut down many of the enemy. He prostrated himself before Nobunaga.

"I have received a report," he said, "to the effect that Mitsuhiyé has sent another army to the Nijō Castle. Lord Nobutada's retainers have

fought bravely, but in vain. He has, alas! made up his mind to kill himself. The enemy have already forced their way into our temple, and I fear that all is lost. Your lordship's obvious duty is to commit *seppuku*, and I'll follow you to the *Meido*!"

"I am quite prepared to do so," said Nobunaga calmly. "Tsuboné, you must take Sambōshi, and leave at once. Why do you hesitate to obey my commands?"

Urged by this repeated order, the lady summoned a retainer and, sorrowfully taking her leave, stole out of the postern.

Nobunaga was now freed from the only cause of his solicitude. He was about to take his life, when a large number of the foes, under the command of Shiōden, burst into the courtyard. Nobunaga seized a bow and arrow, and cried angrily:

"Where is the traitor Mitsuhide? Let him appear, so that he may die by my arrow."

He shot many arrows with such skill and promptitude, that a number of the hostile soldiers fell dead on the spot. The rest were frightened, and did not dare to approach. Taking advantage

of the lull, Nobunaga retired to the inner room and committed *seppuku*. Then Rammaru, Rikimaru, and all the other survivors drew their daggers and stabbed themselves to death.

IV

HASHIBA HIDÉYOSHI, the ablest of Nobunaga's generals, was now engaged in the conquest of Mōri Terumoto, who was the prince of a large part of the Central Provinces, and who had not yet submitted to the supremacy of Nobunaga. Hidéyoshi had for some weeks been carrying on an attack upon the Castle of Takamatsu, in the province of Bitchū, which was one of Terumoto's strongholds. The garrison defended themselves with great courage. The castle was protected on one side by a river, and on the other three sides by swamps; so it was impossible for a large force to approach it by land. Hidéyoshi's character was marked by a wonderful genius for strategy. He saw that the one way to capture the fort was to flood it out with water. With this intent, he commanded his troops to dam up the river below the fortress. This was gradually accomplished. The water rose by degrees, and the higher it rose the more uncomfortable became the occupants of the castle.

One day a female warrior, having a halberd in her hand, forced her way through the ranks of the besieging army and rushed to the entrance of Hidéyoshi's headquarters and cried, with gasps:

"Is General Hidéyoshi within?"

Hidéyoshi, wondering who it could be, went to the door. He was astonished to see Ano-no-Tsuboné, exhausted, pale as death, and covered with wounds, supporting herself by the shaft of a blood-stained halberd. He grasped the fact that she had brought some momentous news; so he softly arranged her clothing, and gave her a stimulating draught, and urged her to tell him her message. The lady fixed her eyes sadly on the general's face and burst into a torrent of tears. But she controlled herself with a great effort, and told between gasps all that had happened. She informed him how MitsuhiKé had treasonably marched on the Honnōji; how Nobunaga and Rammaru and all the other retainers had come to a tragic end; how the nobleman, before his death, had ordered her to communicate to Hidéyoshi his ardent wish that he should be avenged on the traitor. She also told how she had cut

her way through the enemy's ranks with Nobunaga's grandson under her care, how she had left the child under the protection of General Hosokawa, and found her way alone thither, through all manner of perils to bring the tidings. At the conclusion of her narration, she gave one choking gasp and fell prostrate on to the ground, dead.

When he heard this pathetic story, Hidéyoshi was seized with grief and amazement. He feared that if the news of Nobunaga's untimely end should spread, it might dishearten his troops and lead to a defeat. He therefore cried at the top of his voice: "I have killed a woman who has tried to deceive me."

He then returned to an inner room, where he burned incense, and read the sutras, and prayed to the soul of his departed liege lord. When he had finished, he began to ponder how he might best deal with the traitor Mitsuhide.

At this moment messengers from Terumoto arrived, bearing proposals of peace. Hidéyoshi promptly consented to them, and a treaty was at once concluded. Thereupon he raised the siege and hastened towards the Capital in order

to chastise MitsuhiKé. Hidéyoshi was so eager to reach his destination that he hurried on, regardless of the army which accompanied him. A small body-guard kept up as well as they could with their impatient chief.

On the second day of their forced march, Hidéyoshi and his body-guard found themselves at Amagasaki in the province of Settsu. There he rested in a farmer's house, to await the arrival of his army. While he was there, a peasant and a Buddhist priest came and begged for an interview with him. Hidéyoshi's soldiers threatened them, and said that it was very presumptuous for a mere peasant and a humble priest to ask for such a privilege. But the two visitors earnestly repeated their entreaty. They stated that they were well acquainted with the general and had come on purpose to see him. When Hidéyoshi heard of their petition he summoned them to his presence. He scrutinized them closely, but could not recall their faces. He asked them who they were, and what was their business.

"Excuse me, sir," said the rustic peasant, with a look of wonder, "but your memory seems to be very poor. Have you forgotten Chōbei in the

village of Imazato, near Ōsaka? He had the honour of sheltering you two or three years ago, when you and Lord Nobunaga fled there, after losing a battle."

"I am Kenketsu, the priest of the Kwannonji Temple in the province of Ōmi," said the priest familiarly. "When you visited my temple some time ago, I had the pleasure to serve you with tea. Have you forgotten that? When I heard that your honour had come back from the Central Provinces to punish the traitor Mitsuhide, I was filled with joy. I have therefore come with Chōbei, to pay you respects. It gives me great pleasure to see you well and in good spirits."

Hidéyoshi racked his memory, but he could not call them to mind; so he thought that their visit must have some significance. But the sagacious general gave them a nod of recognition.

"Ah!" he said. "I remember both of you. I am glad to see you again, and to have this opportunity of thanking you for past favours."

"I have important news to tell you," said Chōbei seriously. "The traitor Mitsuhide has stationed the main body of his army at my village, and his vanguard is ambuscaded on the main

road to Kyōto. It is therefore very dangerous for you to proceed to the Capital. We have been thinking carefully and, in the humble opinion of both of us, we consider that you had better summon your body-guard and hasten to my village by a bypath, and give MitsuhiKé a surprise attack. If you do this, you can easily destroy him. Our sole intention in coming here was to suggest this plan to you. But I must not forget to offer you this small present"—he took two muskmelons out of a straw basket he was carrying in his hand—"These melons were grown in my field. Kindly do me the honour to accept them."

When he heard these words, Hidéyoshi's suspicions were aroused still more. But he said with an air of confidence, "Thanks, my friends! I deeply appreciate your kindly thoughts."

The two men showed signs of satisfaction and happiness when they heard his thanks. At that moment a company of soldiers rushed forth from a thick forest close by. "We are MitsuhiKé's troops," they cried and, uttering loud shouts, attacked Hidéyoshi's body-guard. Katō Kiyomasa, a brave officer of the guard, immediately rushed at them, and his mighty strokes put them

to rapid flight. The hero at once pursued them to the seashore.

The peasant seemed to be amazed at this sudden attack.

"Your honour," he cried, "you are in great danger! You must not stay here any longer! Hasten, I implore you, to my village! Come with us! We will be your guides! We will go first, and show you the way."

Chōbei and the priest took a few steps forward. Hidéyoshi promptly seized the opportunity, and cut down the priest from behind.

"Villain!" he roared, "you cannot deceive me! I recognize you as Mitsuhide's retainer Shiōden!"

It was useless for Shiōden to conceal his identity any longer, so the hero, who was impersonating the peasant, turned round and threw off his disguise.

"Your shrewdness fills me with admiration, Hidéyoshi," he said. "You have said truly, that I am Shiōden. I regret that my attempt to lure you to destruction has failed, but I intend, nevertheless, to let you sample the sharpness of my sword."

As he spoke he unsheathed a sword, which he

was carrying concealed in a straw wrapper, and made a furious lunge at Hidéyoshi. The soldiers of the latter rushed to his rescue. Shiōden cut and hewed with Herculean strength. It did not take many minutes for several of the soldiers to be slain. The rest took to their heels. In the meanwhile, Hidéyoshi, with his characteristic quick-wittedness, stripped the dead priest of his robe and donned it over his armour. In this disguise, he leapt into his saddle and, spurring the horse, galloped away. Shiōden gave chase, but found it impossible to overtake him. However, he ran at full speed, stumbling over stones, and trampling on cornfields, when Katō Kiyomasa appeared and barred his way. The two heroes closed in a severe contest, and fought for a good while, with equal success. It seemed impossible to tell to whom the victory would fall. But at last Kiyomasa dropped a mighty blow which Shiōden failed to ward off, and the latter was cut down. Kiyomasa then cast a searching eye in all directions to discover the whereabouts of his chief. To his regret and anxiety, Hidéyoshi had ridden into the forest some distance away, and there were no signs of him to be seen.

V

A FEW days after he had caused the murder of Nobunaga, Mitsuhide took possession of Kyōto and the neighbouring provinces. The usurper induced the Emperor to bestow upon him the title of Shogun, and declared his authority throughout the land. He selected the Myōshinji Temple as his headquarters at the Capital, and made extensive arrangements to defend himself against Hidēyoshi's revengeful attack.

Mitsuhide's old mother, Satsuki ("Azalea"), was filled with regret at his heinous crime of having slain his lord. An intense hatred of her son sprang up in her heart, and she declined to live under the same roof with him. At last, in spite of the earnest opposition of her family, she left the temple in the garb of a humble Buddhist pilgrim.

She went to the before-mentioned Amagasaki, and rented a small house. Here she led a solitary life, passing her days and nights in devotion and prayers and the perusal of the sutras. Mitsu-

hidé kept her constantly supplied with money and provisions.

One day Mitsuhié's wife Misao ("Chastity") called at Satsuki's cottage, accompanied by her son Jūjirō's *fiancée* Hatsugiku ("Early Chrysanthemum"), to inquire after her health. The old woman welcomed them heartily. After they had talked on various topics for some minutes, she asked anxiously: "By the by, Misao, is Jūjirō still safe in the headquarters?"

"He is still there," answered Misao. "He ardently wishes to join in today's battle, and to cover himself with glory. He has obtained permission from his father, but his sense of duty prevents him from going to battle without gaining your permission also. He begged me therefore to ask for your consent. Are you willing to allow him to go to war, mother?"

"Jūjirō's idea is indeed admirable," said the old lady, bursting into tears of joy. "I cannot understand how a real *samurai* such as Jūjirō could have possibly been born to such a vile wretch as Mitsuhié. Of course I will grant his request."

At this moment a Buddhist priest wearing

sandals on his feet, and carrying something on his back wrapped in a *furoshiki*, knocked at the door.

"I am a priest," he said, "on a pilgrimage to various temples in different provinces. I am afraid that you will think I am asking too much, but can you give me lodging for the night?"

"I am afraid I can only offer you very poor accommodation," answered the old woman, "but you are welcome to spend the night under my roof."

"Many thanks, my dear madam."

With this he immediately entered, and began to untie his sandals. Misao and Matsugiku brought him a tub of water in which to wash his feet.

"You are very kind, ladies," said the shaveling. "Please do not put yourselves to so much trouble. A travelling priest always has to do everything for himself. I can sleep soundly anywhere, even in the corner of a shed. I need neither a mosquito net nor bedding. Please leave me to myself, and _____"

"There is one thing I must tell you, priest," broke in the old lady. "There is a bath-room just beside the entrance. The bath-tub is luckily

filled with water. You are at liberty to light the fire, and warm it for a bath. I'll take a bath when you have finished."

"Most certainly. I'll do so gladly."

With these words he went out to the bath-room.

~~So~~ afterwards Jūjirō arrived. He was accompanied by a retainer carrying his armour-chest. It was the young *samurai's* intention to make his start for the battle from his grandmother's dwelling.

"I am very glad to see you in such good health, grandmother," he said, bowing politely. "Has mother communicated my request to you? Will you grant it?"

"I am indeed glad to see you, Jūjirō," answered Satsuki almost overcome with joy, "of course I will permit you to go to the battle! Matsugiku is fortunately here, so it is my ardent wish that before you set out for your first battle, you will celebrate your marriage with her. Your joy, dearest girl, must be very great! I will at once fetch some *saké*, so that you can exchange the nuptial cups."

Matsugiku's face was so crimson with blushes that it resembled a frost-bitten maple leaf. She

could not restrain her joy. But Jūjirō sat in melancholy silence. He brooded over the obvious fact that his father's army was doomed to extinction. He had therefore resolved to die fighting. It filled him with pity to see his grandmother and Hatsugiku, who were ignorant of his determination, in such high spirits. The old woman, Misao, and Hatsugiku went into the kitchen to prepare the *saké* and arrange the cups and other articles necessary for the marriage ceremony.

Jūjirō continued his meditations. His head drooped like a withering flower, unable to draw up water. After a time, he wiped away his tears and said to himself: "This is my last farewell in this life, to my dear mother and grandmother. My request has been granted, so I leave this world without any regrets. With what kindness they have brought me up during eighteen long years! Their favours are indeed 'deeper than the ocean and higher than the mountain!' I hope they will bear in mind that it is the common lot of every warrior to die in battle, and forgive me for leaving this life ere they do. And now my thoughts turn towards Hatsugiku. It is fortunate for us that we have not yet exchanged

nuptial cups. I hope that she will give me up and wed another warrior. Poor girl! She will grieve bitterly when she hears the news of my death!"

In the meantime, Hatsugiku had been listening in the adjoining room to this soliloquy which was overflowing with filial piety and love. She rushed in and burst into loud weeping. Jūjirō was astonished, and placed his hand over her mouth.

"Hush, Hatsugiku!" said he reproachfully. "Don't weep so loud. Did you overhear what I said?"

"Yes, I heard everything. How can it be kept a secret from a wife, that her husband is going to die in battle? I thought that you and I were to be husband and wife for two existences,—nay, even three; but alas! dear Jūjirō, how unkind of you to say that it is fortunate for us that we have not yet exchanged nuptial cups! What a pity it is you are going to die in battle, before we are married!"—the girl clung to him and wept—"I would not for all the world have you slain! I implore you to give up all idea of going to the battle-field, dear Jūjirō."

"~~You~~ are a warrior's daughter. I intended from

the first to fight to the death. If grandmother discovers you weeping, and perceives my resolve, I will divorce you for all time and eternity!"

"What is that you say?"

"Oh! we are wasting time in useless conversation. Bring me that armour-chest. Quick!"

"Very well," was the girl's sobbing reply.

"Quickly," said Jūjirō with irritation. "The longer you are, the worse it will be! Do not be so unreasonable."

"It is not possible for me to make haste in helping my beloved husband don his armour, when I know he is bent upon dying on the battle-field."

With these words she took out a suit of armour made of red threaded plates. Its sleeves were besprinkled with a shower of her tears. Jūjirō promptly clothed himself in the beautiful armour and a graceful helmet. Thus equipped, he looked a perfect warrior. His mother and grandmother entered at this moment with *saké*-cups and a wooden stand on which to place them, a *saké* holder with a long handle, and other articles of ceremony. They gazed at his gallant appearance with admiration.

"How fine you look!" exclaimed the old [~]man,



"Bring me that armour-chest. Quick!"

her face wreathed in smiles. "How manly! I feel as if I could behold you fighting a glorious fight! This cup is intended both as your wedding cup and Jūjirō's farewell cup. Take it quickly, bride! What a joyful occasion it is!"

The more the old lady rejoiced the more Hatsu-giku felt the grief of farewell. Her husband was a handsome warrior, and yet now she must exchange the last farewell cup with him!

"You must fight bravely and achieve many glorious deeds, dear husband," she said, smiling bravely to disguise her grief. "But I hope you will return in triumph this evening——"

She could not breathe another word. Her bosom was so wrung with grief that it choked her utterance. When Jūjirō perceived this, he wept also, his tears moistening the string of his helmet. At that moment a sound of battle drums was heard, borne in upon a gust of wind. He summoned up his courage and sprang to his feet.

"And now," he cried, "I must bid farewell to all of you!"

He shook the sleeves of his armour from the grasp of his wife, and darted for the battle-field. Hatsu-giku fell to the ground.

"My heart is broken!" she wailed amid a torrent of tears. The old woman and Misao looked ruefully at each other.

"Oh, mother!" said Misao tearfully.

"Misao!" said the old woman, her voice-broken with sobs. "I have cruelly allowed Jajirō to go to his death. Hatsugiku, I knew that he had resolved to fight to the end. I desired to let him die manfully, rather than see him executed under the brand of 'traitor.' I made you exchange nuptial cups partly for the sake of a last farewell, and partly that you should both separate without any feelings of regret. My thoughts are too deep for expression!" When they heard her confession, both Hatsugiku and Misao fell to crying convulsively. At that moment, the above mentioned priest came in with an air of innocence. "The bath is ready, good ladies," he said, "will one of you take it?"

"Thanks for your trouble," said Satsuki, turning away her tearful face. "But a fresh bath is harmful to an old woman. The others are younger than I. You had better take it first, sir priest."

"Well, while you are busy declining the bath, it

Mr. Nizayemon



Mr. Nizayemon as *Mitsuhide*

is no doubt getting cold, so I will take the liberty to bathe before you."

The priest then went to the bath-room, whilst the three women entered the inner room.

The moon was shedding its pale beams on the projecting roof of the bath-room, and the only sound that broke the stillness of the night was the croaking of the frogs in the rice-field near by. Suddenly Mitsuhiiké appeared at the trellis of bottle-gourds close by the bath-room.

"That priest must be Hidéyoshi," he thought to himself. "I'll dispatch him at a single blow!" He cut down a bamboo from the grove, intending to use it as a spear. He then slowly approached the bath-room with soft stealthy steps. Hearing a sound within he thrust his spear in at the window with great dexterity. Immediately a woman's voice was heard, shrieking in agony. He thought this was very strange, so opening the door, he dragged out the wounded person from within. To his horror and consternation, he discovered that it was not Hidéyoshi, but his own mother Satsuki, who lay before him, writhing in intense pain.

"Great Heavens!" cried Mitsuhide. "Is it you whom I have killed, mother?" He was so stupefied with amazement, that he could utter no other words. Hearing the sounds, Misao and Hatsuhide rushed out and clinging to the dying woman wept bitterly.

"Mother!" cried Misao. "What has brought you to this pitiful plight?"

"Your tears are useless," said the old woman opening her dim eyes. "It is natural that such a misfortune should befall a relative of Mitsuhide. He has murdered his master, Lord Nobunaga, the Minister of the Right. By committing the horrible crime of treason, he has compromised our house which has, up to this time, been free from infamy. He is an undutiful son,—nay, more,—he is an unspeakable wretch. There are no words that can fully express his wickedness. Wealth and rank gained by unrighteous means are like floating clouds. He boasts of having slain his lord. He forgets that even if a man becomes Emperor or Shogun by such wicked means, he is far worse than the most miserable beggar. On the other hand, if a man has a mere pittance to live upon, it is worth more than the income of a great

daimio, if he serves his master and parents faithfully, and duly fulfils the duties of benevolence and justice; of loyalty and filial piety. The baseness of your heart has caused all this misery, Mitsuhide. There are various weapons with which to kill a *samurai*, and yet I am killed with a bamboo spear, which is generally used only for butchering wild boars! The punishment of Heaven, for your having assassinated your lord, is now visited on your mother."

With these words she seized the end of the spear and with great courage thrust it deeper into her wound.

"Oh, think of it, my dear husband!" said Misao, choked with tears. "Why did you not listen to my earnest remonstrances against your evil plan? Had you done so, this misfortune would not have happened to us! I know you did it unwittingly, but think of the horror of having killed your mother with your own hand! Before our mother dies, I beseech you to express sorrow for your deed!"

The true and faithful wife clasped her hands, and urged this entreaty with bitter tears.

"Your reproaches are too bold!" roared Mitsu-

hidé, with inflexible determination written upon his fierce countenance. "Cease to talk such nonsense! Have you forgotten how often that tyrant of Oda Nobunaga insulted me? I was under no great obligations to him. In spite of my faithful remonstrances, he destroyed Shinto and Buddhist temples. His evil deeds increased day by day, so I took his life in accordance with a warrior's duty and for the sake of the Empire. My deed covers me with honour and glory. King Bu of China slew the tyrant Chū and in our own country Hōjō Yoshitoki exiled an Emperor. These illustrious examples show that it is the desire of all Japanese and Chinese heroes to relieve the people of their grievances, by destroying their tyrants. What can women such as you know about such matters? You had better keep away."

There suddenly arose a deafening sound of battle drums. Mitsuhide and the others strained their eyes to see what was happening. At this moment Jūjirō returned, and tottered up to the house, leaning on his sword, with the blood flowing like a torrent from his wounds.

"My parents! Are you here?" he gasped, in the agony of approaching death. Misao and

Matsugiku were struck with sorrow and despair at his ghastly plight. The girl ran up to him.

"Oh, what misery, Jūjirō!" she said with sobs. "First grandmother, and now you are in such a terrible condition! Have courage, my dear!"

"Why are you so downhearted?" cried Mitsuhi-ké, in order to stir up the sinking youth. "What is it? Tell me all that has happened."

Jūjirō pulled himself together and gasped out the news:

"In accordance with your command, I and my army of three thousand horsemen encamped on the seashore, where we lay in ambush. The enemy were quite unsuspecting of this, and rowed up to the shore. There they landed in order to march for the Capital. We did not neglect such an opportunity, so we suddenly fell upon them, uttering loud yells and cries, and cut and hewed in all directions. The enemy were completely taken by surprise, and ran in confusion. We pursued them, and fought with all our strength. Suddenly from behind us a loud voice was heard to cry, 'Stay! Look at me! I am Katō Kiyomasa, a retainer of Hashiba Hidéyoshi. You, the son of the traitor Mitsuhi-ké, and your fol-

lowers shall now feel the sharpness of my sword.' Kiyomasa cut at us with his great sword, and raged with demoniacal fury. His soldiers were so encouraged by this, that they fell upon us with renewed vigour. So powerful was their attack, that in a few minutes my troops were killed to a man. I am the sole survivor of the battle, left to tell you that tale, dear father."

"What cowardice!" cried Mitsuhide, his hair bristling with desperate anger. "What has become of Shiōden?"

"Shiōden's one aim was the destruction of Hidéyoshi. He fought by himself since yesterday morning, and I missed him in the *mêlée*. I do not know for certain whether he is alive or dead. I was anxious about father's safety, and so I cut my way through the enemy's ranks, and have come back here. It is dangerous to stay here any longer. Do not lose a moment in hurrying back to our province, father!"

Although he was rapidly losing strength on account of his wounds, Jūjirō only thought of his father. His grandmother so admired his filial piety, that she burst into tears.

"Listen, Misao," she said, "Jūjirō is fatally

wounded, and yet he thinks only of my wicked son. He is a splendid example of filial piety! "Mitsuhidé, have you no feelings of pity or love for your son? Alas! my dearest grandson has lost his life in the infamous name of a vile traitor, instead of dying honourably in the cause of loyalty and justice. This is the result of your wicked heart! Oh, what have I done to deserve such a fate?"

The dying warrior heard the voice of the old woman.

"Ah! Are you indeed killed, grandmother?" he asked in faint tones. "Is this our last farewell? I should like to see your face once more before I die, but I can see no longer. Farewell, father, mother, and Hatsugiku."

With these words he breathed his last, with his hand fast held by Hatsugiku.

"It is true that it is the common lot of every warrior to die in battle," said his mother bursting into bitter tears— "but oh! the pity of it! For eighteen years he has never known a moment of enjoyment. All his days have been passed in the din and noise of war. He has devoted all his life to the art of the bow and arrow. This morn-

ing, when he was on the point of starting for the battle-field, he said with a smile, 'Dear mother, I expect to distinguish myself in my first battle today. I shall be praised for it by father and grandmother.' His bright smile as he spoke still lingers in my vision. I can't forget it."

Hatsugiku wept bitterly. "Is there any one in all the wide world more unhappy than I?" she sobbed. "Only this morning I was married to him, and now we are parted for ever! We have bidden each other a sad farewell, and have never placed our pillows side by side even once. What sin have I committed that Heaven should punish me thus? My only wish is that I should accompany my husband to the *Meido*. Oh, let me die with him!"

The girl took the hand of the dead warrior, and looked tenderly at his pale face. At this touching sight, Misao and Satsuki burst again into loud weeping.

The filial love and paternal affection of the brave Mitsuhide were now stirred to their depths. He could restrain his grief no longer, but burst into floods of tears. At that moment a confused noise of battle cries, neighing horses, and the whiz of

darting arrows, was heard near at hand. Mitsu-hidé sprang to his feet.

“Do those sounds come from the enemy or from my troops?” he cried. “Is it victory or defeat?”

He climbed a knotted pine-tree in the front of the yard, and stared fixedly on the villages below.

“See!” he cried. “A large number of war vessels are sailing up one after the other from the left of the Wada promontory. Ah! I can see among them the banner of ‘A Thousand Gourds.’ I am sure it is Hidéyoshi’s army! He has managed to escape from this house, and is now marching against me.”

With these words he jumped down. “Well,” he cried. “I’ll strike the ‘ape-faced sandal bearer’¹ down with a single blow.” He ran out with a determined countenance.

At that moment a voice cried: “Wait one moment, Akéchi Mitsu-hidé. Hashiba Hidéyoshi wants to meet you.”

With these words, the hero himself appeared on the scene, dressed in a brilliant war-coat and

¹ In his younger days, Hidéyoshi served Oda Nobunaga as *sōri tori* or sandal bearer, and his face somewhat resembled that of an ape.

beautiful armour instead of the priest's robe in which he had been disguised. Mitsuhide looked back in amazement and, retracing his steps, cried with a fierce look:

"I am glad to see you, Hidéyoshi. Akéchi Mitsuhide will now celebrate your funeral rites. Prepare for your last moments." Mitsuhide was ready for an attack, but the dying mother intercepted them.

"Lord Hidéyoshi," she said, "look at me. I have been killed with this bamboo-spear, as a divine punishment for my son's crime of having murdered his master. I don't regret dying by the hand of my son, because I hope that my death may be a means of extenuating his vile crime. Lord Hidéyoshi, I beseech you to place it upon record that Mitsuhide's mother was crucified for the sake of her son's crime. Mitsuhide will then be freed from the infamy of matricide. I beg you to do this out of my foolish affection for my wicked son. I die contented, for I would rather hasten to the other world after my grandson than stay in this wearisome universe. Farewell! Farewell!"

So saying she passed peacefully away. Misao

and Hatsugiku flung themselves on the body with loud protestations of grief. Struck with sympathy for Mitsuiké's mother, Hidéyoshi was silent for a while. Then he said:

"Mitsuiké, you are my sworn enemy. It would be an easy matter for me to kill you now that you are defenceless. But I am incapable of such an unmanly deed. This is what I propose to do. I will meet you on an appointed day at Yamazaki, in the province of Yamashiro, and our conflict shall be decided by a fight to the death. Do you agree to this?"

"If you wish it," answered Mitsuiké, "so be it. I will return to the Capital, gather together my troops, and meet you at Yamazaki in two or three days."

After making this promise the two heroes bowed courteously to each other and parted.

The battle of Yamazaki was fought two days afterwards. In the beginning, both armies fought with equal success, but, later on, Mitsuiké's troops lost ground, little by little, until at last most of them fell. Mitsuiké, with great diffi-

culty, succeeded in cutting his way through the enemy's ranks, and took a road by a bamboo grove, near the village of Ogurusu. Suddenly a company of Hidéyoshi's horsemen, who had overtaken him by a short cut, fell upon him. He fearlessly encountered them, and cut thirteen of them down, the rest taking to flight.

Mitsuhidé alighted and, resting in the shade of the bamboos, began to think of his past and present fortunes, good and bad. He recognized that all hope was now gone, so he made up his mind to commit suicide. He knelt with signs of despair, and made ready to perform the melancholy deed. At that moment, however, several peasants thrust at him with bamboo-spears from inside the grove. The wounded warrior sprang to his feet with a roar of rage and furiously cut at them. They were immediately filled with terror and beat a hasty retreat. Then Mitsuhidé again resumed his former position, and with calm determination committed *seppuku*. On the second of June he had assassinated Nobunaga, and it was on the thirteenth of the same month that he met his tragic end. So that his glory as Shogun had lasted only ten days.

Misao and Hatsugiku entered a nunnery, where they took life vows, and for the remainder of their days prayed for the departed souls.

O-Somē and Hisamatsu

From

The Shimpan Uta Zaimon

By

Chikamatsu Hanji

O-Somé and Hisamatsu

I



HERE once lived a young man named Hisamatsu. He was in the service of the proprietress of a prosperous oil-shop close by the Kawaraya Bridge, in the city of Ōsaka. He was eighteen years of age and had an amiable disposition, an honest character, and a very handsome person.

His father, Sagara Jōdayū, who had formerly been a noble *samurai* of the Ishizu Clan, in the province of Izumi, had in his custody a Yoshimitsu blade, which was an ancestral treasure of his liege lord. This blade was stolen and, as a mark of apology, Jōdayū committed *seppuku* and his house was ruined.

Hisamatsu was then a mere baby, under the protection of his nurse O-Shō. Both nurse and child were taken to the house of the former's elder brother Kyūsaku, a farmer in the village of Nozaki several miles from Ōsaka. Kyūsaku brought the

boy up among the children of the coarse peasants until he was ten years old, when he was sent to the shop before mentioned with a view to his learning good manners and refined ways.

The shop was kept by a middle-aged widow called O-Katsu, who had many clerks and servants besides Hisamatsu in her employment. Her only daughter and heiress, O-Somé, had been brought up tenderly, and in great luxury. She was, at that time, seventeen years old, and generally considered throughout the city to be peerlessly beautiful. A mutual attachment sprang up between her and Hisamatsu, and they secretly exchanged vows of eternal fidelity.

Unfortunately for the devoted lovers, an obstacle arose in their way. There was a young millionaire named Yamagaya Sashirō living in the same city, and he was passionately enamoured of O-Somé. One day he impetuously asked O-Somé's mother for her daughter's hand in marriage. The mother disliked him, and had a certain amount of sympathy for her daughter's affection for Hisamatsu. She therefore was unwilling to accept his proposal. But she owed Sashirō's father thousands of *ryō*, so she dared

not give him a direct refusal. She was at last compelled to give a reluctant consent, but she added that the marriage would have to be postponed until she could fully persuade her daughter. This was, however, only a pretext, for she hoped that in the meantime circumstances would make it possible for her positively to refuse Sashirō's offer.

Sashirō was by no means reassured by O-Katsu's consent. He wanted so keenly to win the heart of O-Somé, that he prayed the gods and Buddha for the fulfilment of his desire. Every day he visited different temples and shrines to repeat his foolish prayer. One day he went to a great shrine called the Zama Myōjin in the city, not far from O-Somé's house, and was earnestly making *hyakudo-mairi*, or the "hundredfold penance," walking up and down on the long pavement between the sanctuary and the *torii*. Kosuké, the head clerk of the oil-shop, chanced to discover him wrapped in devotion. Kosuké was a crafty and covetous knave. He had at Sashirō's request, secretly delivered a love-letter to O-Somé, and moreover he had heard of her intrigue with Hisamatsu. He therefore evolved the dark scheme of having

Hisamatsu dismissed on some false charge or other, in order to enable Sashirō to be successful in his love-affair, and also to receive a good sum from him in return. Now when he discovered Sashirō making *hyakudo-mairi*, his heart bounded with joy, for he thought the opportunity had come for him to satisfy his greed. He ran to the house of a fortune-teller who was living in front of the shrine. He whispered in the old diviner's ears all the details of Sashirō's affair, and suggested a plan by which they could extort money from the foolish suitor. The greedy old clairvoyant gave a ready consent, and Kosuké departed.

Kosuké then stealthily returned to the shrine, and watched Sashirō's doings. The young millionaire had by this time finished his *hyakudomairi*, and was now prostrated before the sanctuary and utterly ignorant of Kosuké's presence. He clapped his hands, and prayed with closed eyes:

"*Namu Zama God!* Grant that I may obtain O-Somé, daughter of the oil-shop keeper at Kawaraya-bashi, for my wife. Almighty God, cause her heart to be filled with love for me! *Namu Shimmei God!* *Namu Inari God!* *Namu Hachi-*

man God! Vouchsafe that my desire may be realized——”

“Sashirō San, I believe!” cried Kosuké, suddenly laying a hand on his shoulder. “How diligent you are, as usual!”

“Is it you, Kosuké?” said he with a startled look. “When did you come here?”

“I came a little while ago, and heard all your fervent prayer.”

“Did you?” said Sashirō, rubbing his head in perplexity. “I am ashamed to hear it!”

“Why should you be ashamed, sir? I have handed O-Somé the letter you gave me the other day, and I have brought her answer——” he smiled mischievously—“Perhaps you will be too ashamed to look at her letter in my presence.”

“What! An answer from O-Somé?” cried Sashirō in pleased surprise. “That’s good news indeed! Let me see it at once, Kosuké.”

So saying, he held out his hand. But the cunning clerk pushed it off, and taking a letter from the bosom of his *kimono* said:

“You are very impatient, sir. Indeed I have the letter here, but I cannot so readily give it to you. I will read it to you, and you must give

me a thank-offering for each encouraging sentence. I will not read it unless you do so. Do you agree to my conditions, sir?"

"Certainly."

Kosuké unfolded the letter, and began to read with an important air.

" 'DEAR SASHIRŌ: Many thanks for your favour of the other day.' Observe that O-Somé says, 'Many thanks.' 'I am very pleased that you appreciate me so much—' mark her words—'very pleased,'"—he held out his hand—"Give me the first thank-offering, sir!"

Sashirō produced a gold coin, and handed it to Kosuké, saying:

"Come! Read on, sir."

" 'But it grieves me to say that I am obliged to decline your kind proposal, as I have a mother and I cannot decide anything without consulting her!'"

"But," groaned Sashirō, "doesn't she say 'decline your proposal?'"

"Don't be disappointed! That sentence means that if her mother gives permission, she will consent to marry you. Now listen to some more: 'I asked my mother for her opinion and, to my joy and

happiness, she said that I could have a free hand in matters relating to matrimony.' What do you think of that, sir?"

"Here is another thank-offering," said Sashirō filled with an ecstasy of joy, and giving him double the previous amount. "Read the remainder quickly."

" 'But frankly I must tell you that I have no regard for you.' "

"Oh! 'No regard for me'! "

"One minute, sir! I think that statement is the outcome of modesty. What follows proves my opinion. 'I suppose you are jesting with me,' and the next sentence is this: 'If you are in earnest, I hope that you will—' What follows is of the greatest importance, and merits a very large thank-offering, sir."

No sooner had he spoken, than Sashirō again doubled the reward, and urged him to proceed further.

Kosuké read on composedly: " 'If you are in earnest, I hope that you will completely give me up. It would be impossible for me to bring myself to regard such a man as you with love and respect' "

"Oh horror! What follows?" exclaimed the disappointed suitor.

"Well, as to the rest—"—Kosuké rapidly ran his eye over the remaining part of the letter—"I think you had better not hear it. I won't read it. If I did you would not find it interesting. I am afraid you must consider your generous thank-offering as so much money lost. You might as well have dropped it in a well or a gutter."

Sashirō's face suddenly fell, as if he brooded over the fruitlessness of all his prayers, and the "hundredfold penance."

"To tell you the truth, sir," said Kosuké, "your love is thwarted by that stripling Hisamatsu. I have no doubt that O-Somé is bewitched by him. Therefore I think the best thing for you to do is to get a necromancer to offer prayers for severing their relations. What do you think of that, sir?"

"That is a capital idea," said Sashirō, recovering his spirits. "First of all I will ask a fortune-teller whether my love will be attained, and in case there is hope, I must make him offer prayers."

Thus the guileless Sashirō was entrapped, and they went together to consult the aforesaid diviner.

The old quack purposely assumed a serious countenance, and looked intently at Sashirō's face for a good while.

"Oh, you have a remarkable physiognomy," he exclaimed. "I judge from it that you are thirty-one years of age. Am I indeed correct? You seem to be a very rich man, and with such wealth at your disposal you can accomplish anything you desire."

At this keen insight, Sashirō was wonder-struck. The old man continued: "You have come to ask my help in a love affair, I dare say. Am I right, sir?" Sashirō nodded reverentially, filled both with astonishment and admiration. "Well," continued the clairvoyant, "there is an obstacle in the way of your love affair. You cannot hope to realize your desire, until you have disposed of a serious rival. If you like I will do away with him by virtue of prayers. If he is got out of the way, there is no doubt your purpose will be attained, sir."

These words inspired Sashirō with an absolute confidence in the powers of the fortune-teller, and he decided to invite him to his house, in order that he might offer prayers for seven days and seven

nights for the death of Hisamatsu. In return he promised to pay a large quantity of silver and gold coins. These arrangements were concluded, and the three of them took leave of each other.

To return to Hisamatsu. On the afternoon of the same day, he went on an errand in order to collect a sum of 150 *ryō* from his mistress' customers. The villainous Kosuké determined to seize this opportunity to execute his evil design against Hisamatsu. With this intent he secretly shadowed him.

Hisamatsu was quite unaware of this, and after he had received the money, he hastened back in the direction of the shop.

Just in front of the fortune-teller's stand he fell in with his sweetheart O-Somé, who was strolling about the Zama Shrine, hoping to meet him.

The young lovers were rejoiced at meeting each other, and for a while they were engaged in happy conversation. They soon found it inconvenient to talk on the public street, so they entered the fortune-teller's house, from which the old man was fortunately away. There they were safe from observation so they were able to talk freely

over the things they had for days been keeping in store.

Suddenly their blissful conversation was interrupted by a sound of loud wrangling and cries of a crowd, proceeding from outside the gate. They were filled with excitement and curiosity, and rushing out, they saw, in the midst of a throng of people, a *samurai* engaged in a fierce quarrel with a merchant. The *samurai* was about to draw his sword. Hisamatsu and O-Somé mingled with the crowd, and were surprised to see Kosuké there! They stole quietly away, to avoid being seen by him. While he was looking at the quarrel, Hisamatsu's pocket was picked of his mistress' purse of money. This had been carefully arranged by an artifice of Kosuké's. The *samurai* and the merchant were his accomplices, and their quarrel was a mere trick done to divert Hisamatsu's attention.

When he returned to the oil-shop, Hisamatsu was amazed to discover the loss of the purse, but his regrets were of no avail. All his associates suspected him of theft, and Kosuké in particular censured and abused him.

II

HISAMATSU'S foster-father Kyūsaku was an honest old man. His family consisted of three members besides Hisamatsu: his wife, his step-daughter, who was named O-Mitsu, and himself. The wife had been ailing a long time, and consequently O-Mitsu was so busy nursing her mother, cooking for the family, and with other matters, that she had little or no time for her own toilet, though she was now at the attractive age of sixteen. O-Mitsu was the daughter of Kyūsaku's wife by her former husband, but being of a sweet disposition, she regarded Kyūsaku with as much affection as was due to a real father. The old man in return loved her with a more than parental affection. He and his wife had early made up their minds to marry her to Hisamatsu. They had several times hinted as much to her evident joy.

Kyūsaku, therefore, was surprised and grieved to hear that Hisamatsu was paying attention to his mistress' daughter. The old man's sorrow and anxiety were intensified when he heard that

Hisamatsu had lost the great sum of 150 *ryō*, belonging to his mistress. The honest and upright Kyūsaku thought that he himself was responsible for the missing money, and that he must by some means or other repay the full sum. With this firm resolution, he struggled with great difficulty to raise the amount required by selling his patch of land, and by raising a mortgage on O-Mitsu's garments, combs, and ornaments. His next intention was to hasten to Ōsaka, with the money, and to apologize for his foster-son's carelessness.

Notwithstanding the fact that it was already past noon, he made preparations for his journey. O-Mitsu begged him to postpone his journey until the following morning, saying that it was too late. But Kyūsaku obstinately refused to listen. He said that he was not too old to walk a dozen to fifteen miles or so, and he would be back before dusk. He then bade her take good care of the sick woman and started for the city.

Soon after his departure, Kosuké arrived, accompanied by Hisamatsu. He had come in obedience to his mistress' command to take the young man to his father's home for the time being, until the matter of the lost money should be

cleared up. But the black-hearted Kosuké determined to seize this opportunity of abusing the innocent youth, and make him give up all idea of returning to the oil-shop.

Kosuké had scarcely entered the door, before he cried: "Is Kyūsaku in? Hisamatsu has committed a serious misdeed, so I have brought him back on purpose from Ōsaka."

When O-Mitsu heard Hisamatsu's name mentioned, she rushed out and joyfully exclaimed: "Oh, Hisamatsu San! How glad I am to see you back!"

"You should be sorrowful, not glad, that Hisamatsu has returned," broke in Kosuké. "He has appropriated the large sum of 150 *ryō*, and spent it on harlots! So I have come to demand from Kyūsaku immediate repayment of the money. If he refuse, I will deliver Hisamatsu to the authorities."

"Oh! Impossible!" exclaimed the girl. "Hisamatsu is incapable of such a thing! The charge must be false! Oh, Hisamatsu, plead your innocence!"

"If he could have explained away his charge, I would not have taken the trouble to bring him

back," said Kosuké smiling bitterly. "Come. Is Kytōsaku in? If he is in, let him appear. He seems to be a poor peasant, living from hand to mouth. It is clear that he cannot pay such a large amount. But nevertheless I want to see him. Call him at once, girl!"

"Father is not at home, sir," answered O-Mitsu. "He started for Ōsaka some time ago. Did you not meet him on the road?"

"Gone to Ōsaka?" said Kosuké, getting more irritated. "That is a lie! If it were true, I should have met him on the way here. He must be hiding somewhere. I'll search the house for him."

With these words Kosuké rose to his feet, and prepared to enter the inner apartment. O-Mitsu hurriedly stood in his way.

"My sick mother is lying in that room," she said. "Please speak a little more quietly, sir."

But Kosuké did not heed her, and pushing her aside, prepared to enter the room. The gentle Hisamatsu could remain passive no longer. He caught the ill-mannered clerk by the sleeve, and said:

"This violence is not necessary, Kosuké! Our mistress only ordered me to return home, and stay

with my parents for the time being. She did not tell you to act in this summary manner!"

"I act in a summary manner?" roared Kosuké wrathfully. "You, a thief, dare to talk to me in that presumptuous manner?"

So crying he struck Hisamatsu a blow which felled him to the ground, and then kicked and trampled upon him.

The horror-struck girl could do nothing but look on trembling and wringing her hands. At this moment Kyūsaku suddenly returned. O-Mitsu rushed to him, crying with joy: "Oh father, help Hisamatsu." Scarcely had she spoken, when the old man seized the ruffian, and threw him with a thud on to the floor.

"You are Kyūsaku!" said Kosuké, rising to his feet. "How rude you are to throw me down, decrepit old man!"

"Ha! Ha!" said Kyūsaku laughing. "How could I, an old man, throw you down, even if I try my hardest? You fell down accidentally! Well, I started this afternoon for Ōsaka by a short route, intending to call at your shop. When I had reached the outskirts of my village, I heard that Hisamatsu and a gentleman had passed there

a little while before. I therefore abandoned my journey, and have come back to meet you, sir. I beg to thank you for having come from such a distance. O-Mitsu, serve tea to our honourable guest and also prepare some food or other for him. Please make yourself at home, sir——”

“Oh, don’t trouble yourself,” interrupted the arrogant clerk. “How could my digestion endure food prepared in such a dirty house? Cease talking nonsense, and come to the point quickly. Will you repay the 150 *ryō* that Hisamatsu has purloined, or must I sue him? Answer me quickly, Kyūsaku.”

He then proceeded to give a garbled and false account of Hisamatsu’s loss of the money.

“Of course I’ll pay the money,” said Kyūsaku calmly, throwing a packet of money on the floor, after which he continued: “Here is your money. See if the amount is all right.”

Kosuké picked the packet up wonderingly, and opened it. Several gold coins rolled with a jingle on the floor. He counted them, and found that the sum was indeed 150 *ryō*.

“Now that I have repaid the money,” said Kyūsaku somewhat angrily, “you have nothing

more to grumble at, I suppose! Really, I intended to ask you one or two serious questions, Kosuké San, but for your own sake I will refrain from doing so. I do not require you any further, so I beg you to leave at once. Good afternoon."

Kosuké had not a word to say in reply, and so, placing the money in his bosom, he went away.

After the rascal had departed, Hisamatsu and O-Mitsu heaved sighs of relief.

"Thank you very much, dear father," said Hisamatsu wonderingly, "but how did you manage to raise so great a sum as 150 *ryō*?"

"Poor as I am, I don't find it difficult to raise such an amount, should an emergency occur! To tell the truth, I have always had the money ready in case of need. Don't let that matter trouble you, my son. I am very glad that you have come well and sound! Fortunately today is a lucky day, so I think it would be a suitable occasion on which to celebrate your nuptials with O-Mitsu, according to our arrangement. It will make your sick mother and myself happy. I am sure you will both agree."

Hisamatsu was greatly perplexed. He remained silent, thinking of his binding vows with

Mr. Baikō



Mr. Baikō as *O-Mitsu*

O-Somé. O-Mitsu on the other hand was speechless with joy.

"Aha, I see!" said Kyūsaku smilingly. "You are both too bashful to answer, I suppose. Of course you agree. I will at once tell the old woman of this, and make her happy. Come with me to her sick-room, Hisamatsu. Meanwhile O-Mitsu, you must dress your hair, and prepare a dish or two for the wedding feast."

Thereupon the old man and Hisamatsu went into the inner room.

When O-Mitsu was left alone, she immediately set about cooking. While her hand was busy with a kitchen knife, her heart was overflowing with thoughts of a happy married life. The spell of her blissful reverie was suddenly broken by a girl's voice saying: "Is this Kyūsaku San's house? If so, has a young man named Hisamatsu called?"

O-Mitsu opened the door to see who it was. She was surprised to see that the visitor was a supremely beautiful girl, dressed in the latest fashion of Ōsaka. She was evidently the daughter of a good family. The truth flashed across O-Mitsu's mind. She concluded that the girl must be the much-talked-of O-Somé, the daughter of

the proprietress of the oil-shop. Then the rumour she had heard, that Hisamatsu was unduly intimate with her, was an actual fact. Strong feelings of jealousy took possession of her mind

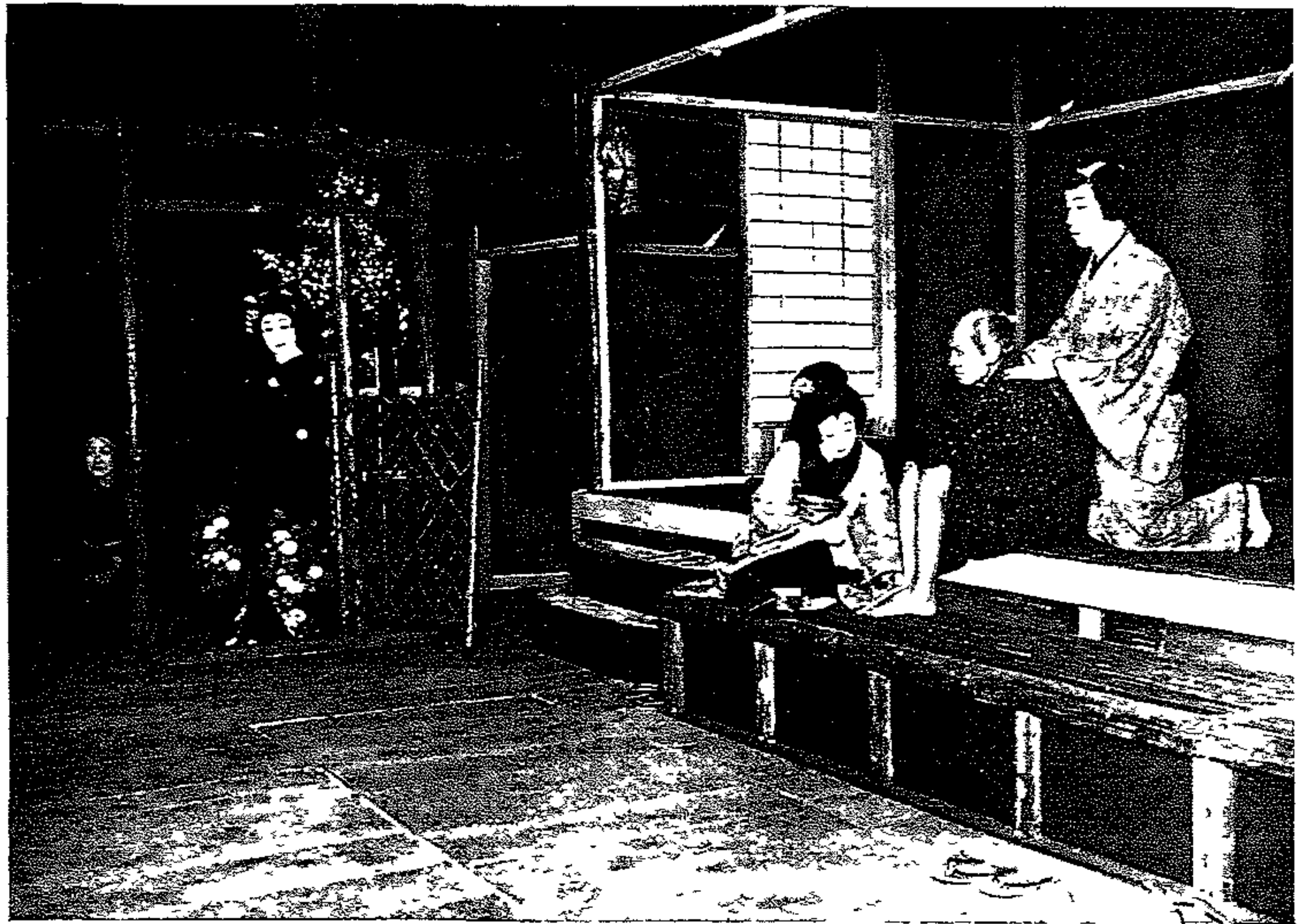
"Kyūsaku and Hisamatsu?" was her brusque reply. "I don't know the names. Go and enquire elsewhere."

Needless to say, the visitor was O-Somé. She had been overwhelmed with sorrow, when she had heard that her beloved had gone back to his parents' home. So, with the excuse that she was going to visit the temple of Kwannon at the village of Nozaki, she had called, accompanied by a maid. She knew that this must be Hisamatsu's house, because she had been informed of the fact by a villager. She therefore refused to leave. Wishing to propitiate the offended girl, she offered her some coral beads, wrapt in a *fukusa*,¹ saying politely:

"I had forgotten all about this, my girl. Please accept a little present as a memento of my first visit to your house."

O-Mitsu mechanically held out her hand to receive the gift, but said angrily: "I may be only

¹ A silk wrapper.



O-Somé and Hisamatsu produced at the Imperial Theatre

a country girl, but you cannot lure me into your
snare! I don't want your paltry present! You
may take it home!"

With these words she threw the gift on to the
ground, and slammed the door in O-Somé's face.
Soon afterwards Kyūsaku and Hisamatsu came
from the sick-room.

"How is the cooking getting on, O-Mitsu?"
said the old man, seating himself on the mat.
"My old age is beginning to tell on me. I have
walked only a short distance, and yet my shoul-
ders and feet ache sorely. Hisamatsu, come and
massage my back. O-Mitsu, if you have time,
will you cauterize my feet with moxa?"

"Certainly, father," she replied promptly.
Hisamatsu at once began to massage Kyūsaku's
shoulders, and O-Mitsu applied moxa to his feet.
In the meantime O-Somé, who was still outside,
caught a glimpse of Hisamatsu through a chink of
the door. She was longing for him so ardently,
that she could not resist giving a loud cough, to
let him know that she was there. When he heard
the cough, Hisamatsu glanced through the chink,
and was taken aback when he saw his sweetheart.
He feared that his father might discover the truth.

So he gave a hint, by saying: "The occasion is bad! The place is wrong!"

Kyūsaku was astonished at his son's words. "The place is wrong?" he said, "what do you mean by that, Hisamatsu?"

Hisamatsu for a while was puzzled how to reply. "Well," he said at last, "I mean O-Mitsu is applying the moxa in the wrong place."

"That's untrue," said O-Mitsu impatiently. "A beautiful hussy from Ōsaka has come here inquiring for Hisamatsu. He shows, by saying such strange things, that he is possessed heart and soul with that she-devil."

"What do you say, O-Mitsu Don?" said Hisamatsu, looking at her fiercely. "A beautiful hussy! A devil! Never let me hear you repeat such things again, or you will repent it bitterly."

"Oh, I am not afraid. I shall repeat it if I wish. I am sure that you are infatuated with that wanton hussy! Is it not so?"

"Ha! Ha!" broke in Kyūsaku laughing. "It is early days for you to be jealous and squabble like that. Why, you are not married yet. Hark! The old woman is groaning again. This time you must nurse her with me, O-Mitsu."

So saying, the old man took the reluctant girl with him into the sick-room.

No sooner was Hisamatsu left alone, than he rushed down to the door and opened it. O-Somé ran in, and both embraced each other, speechless with emotion. After a brief silence, the girl said: "This morning I was astonished to read in your letter that you were going back to stay for the time being in your village. I was still more astonished, and overcome with sorrow, when at the foot of the letter I read your unkind words: 'Please give me up, and accept Sashirō's proposal.' I was so sorrowful and anxious, that I could no longer remain quiet at home. I keenly wanted to meet you, and sound your mind in order to make my decision. I therefore told them at home that I was going to visit the temple of Kwannon at Nozaki and left the house with a maid. I had great difficulty in finding my way here, but I arrived at last. Have you really made up your mind to give me up? If you have decided to do so, I shall take my life. In that case, I hope that after my death, you will wed that girl, and live thereafter a happy married life." Saying this, she produced a dagger from her *kimono*, and was

about to plunge it into her throat, when Hisamatsu caught her arm, and exclaimed in bewilderment: "If you long for me as intensely as ~~that~~, you shall not die *alone*! I must confess the truth, that I also, long ago, made up my mind to destroy myself!"

In their excitement, they had so raised their voices that the sound penetrated into the inner apartment. Kyūsaku was immediately heard to cry: "Oh, that is a bad resolve!"

The surprised lovers started apart, and O-Somô was about to rush out. However, Kyūsaku at that moment appeared, and bade her stay. The old man greeted her politely, and then mildly but earnestly reproved their conduct. He said that it was an unpardonable crime for a servant to seduce his mistress' daughter. It was also a great disgrace for the daughter of a good family to form a *liaison* with a man in their service. Therefore the pair must give each other up, even if it broke their hearts.

"While the old woman still breathes," continued Kyūsaku with tears, "I want to marry Hisamatsu to O-Mitsu, that the poor old soul may go to the *Meido* with a peaceful mind. So it is my

ardent desire that you should both listen to my advice, and give each other up."

The young lovers shed bitter tears, and expressed sorrow for their misdeed, and promised to follow his admonition. But they made up their minds to commit suicide together, and communicated their melancholy decision to each other by means of secret signs. Kyūsaku was rejoiced to hear their promise, and highly admired their ready obedience. He then brought a bottle of *saké* and cups, with the intention of immediately making Hisamatsu and O-Mitsu exchange the nuptial cups.

"I say, O-Mitsu," he cried, "if you are ready, come here quickly!"

O-Mitsu slowly walked in with a *watabōshi*¹ covering her head and face, and sat down before Hisamatsu.

"Oh, you have decided to wear a veil, O-Mitsu!" said Kyūsaku laughingly. "You are quite right to observe an old usage. And yet that looks too formal. You had better take it off."

¹ A hood and a veil combined and made of undyed cotton or silk.

So saying the old man removed the veil, and was astonished to see that her jet-black hair, which had formerly been newly dressed in the beautiful Shimada style, was cut short. She also was holding a rosary in her hand, and was entirely dressed in the robes of a Buddhist nun! They were all three struck dumb with amazement. O-Mitsu's lips trembled, and she suddenly burst into floods of tears.

"I am sure," she said, "that you are all astonished at my appearance. I judged from Hisamatsu's and O-Somé's manner and looks that they would kill themselves if I did not become a nun. So in order to save their lives, I have abandoned my love, affection, and jealousy, and have resolved to pass the rest of my days in seclusion as a nun. I earnestly hope that you will both live for ever as man and wife, and allow me to be as a sister to you. I do not, believe me, feel any ill-will towards either of you. I beg that you will not let my sacrifice prove useless."

The three listeners could do nothing but weep and lament at the girl's touching confession.

Whilst the above described scene had been taking place, a middle-aged woman had been

watching the scene from outside the door. She was none other than O-Somé's mother, O-Katsu, who had been so anxious about her daughter that she had followed her. She had overheard O-Mitsu's words, and was moved to tears. She opened the door, and entered the room with the hot tears fast rolling down her cheeks. She apologized profusely for her daughter, and expressed her hearty sympathy and admiration for O-Mitsu. She then turned to Kyūsaku, and told him that she entirely believed in Hisamatsu's innocence in the matter of the lost 150 *ryō*. She had left the superintendence of her clerks and servants in the hands of the head clerk Kosuké, and so the business was now under his care. Now that Kyūsaku had so generously repaid the money, there was no need for Hisamatsu to stay any longer with his parents. She would take him back with her to Ōsaka, and he might continue in her service as before.

"I cannot find words in which to express my gratitude to O-Mitsu for her noble sacrifice!" concluded she. "Kyūsaku San, will you allow me to offer her this sum of money, as a token of my thankfulness?"

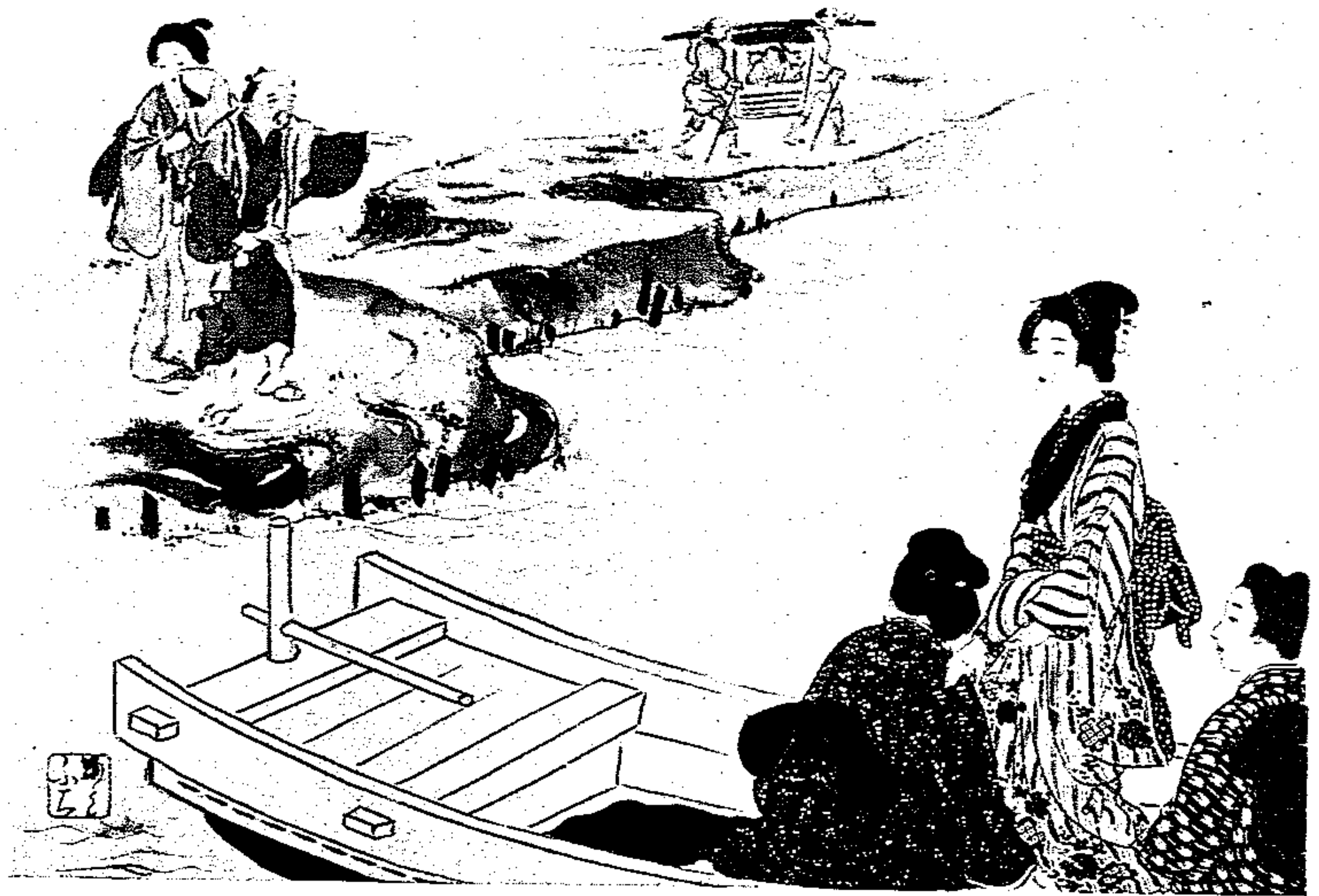
So saying, she handed the old man the 150 *ryō* which she had received from Kosuké.

At first he positively declined the gift, but, on her pressing him, he accepted it with hearty thanks.

Evening was now drawing in, and O-Katsu prepared to take her departure with Hisamatsu, O-Somé, and the maid. But she was afraid that if the young couple were to go back together at night, it might give a handle to gossip. It was therefore decided that Hisamatsu should return by land, and O-Somé by river.

The party all went together as far as the ferry, where Hisamatsu took a palanquin, and O-Katsu and the girls boarded a boat. Kyūsaku and O-Mitsu accompanied the party to the ferry. They stood on the bank and, as the boat and the palanquin receded from their sight, they called, "Farewell, Hisamatsu." "Farewell, O-Somé San!" and they were delighted to see handkerchiefs waved from the palanquin and the boat, in response.

The two wistfully remained there, until at last they lost sight of the palanquin and the boat.



Hisamatsu took a palanquin and the girls boarded a boat

III

THE time passed on, and the love between Hisamatsu and O-Somé became more and more intense; and many weeks had not passed before O-Somé's health became delicate. The prospects of their future filled them with anxiety. When the widow perceived her daughter's condition, she was inclined to wed the young couple. But as her circumstances had not in any way improved, she dared not withdraw her promise to Sashirō on the ground of O-Somé's disinclination. Sashirō in the meantime was becoming impatient at the delay in his go-between's negotiations.

One day he called in person at the oil-shop, and urged the widow to make immediate arrangements for his marriage with O-Somé.

The widow was in a dilemma, but she hit upon a cunning idea. She summoned O-Somé to her room, and told her that as she owed Sashirō's father a large sum of money, it was impossible for her to withdraw her promise. So that if she

wished to save her mother from embarrassment she must marry him, even if it were against her will. But it would not be necessary for her to stay long in the home of Sashirō, for whom she had no affection. She was at liberty to come back any time after a week or two. All she need do was to go once to Sashirō's house as his bride. The mother would then have kept her promise even though the daughter would soon forsake the bridegroom. The mother so earnestly, and with tears, begged her to yield, that O-Somé was obliged to give her consent. But it was impossible for so pure and innocent a maiden to do such a perfidious deed. She therefore made up her mind to give up her life for her love. When Hisamatsu heard of her determination he made up his mind to do the same.

At this juncture an unexpected event, which bid fair to revolutionize Hisamatsu's life, took place. It was as follows. Kyūsaku's sister O-Shō, who had been nurse to Hisamatsu had, after many long years' persistent search, succeeded in restoring the Yoshimitsu blade, the loss of which had caused the death of Hisamatsu's father and the ruin of his house. If the sword should be presented to

the prince of the Ishizu Clan, Hisamatsu's house would be restored, and he himself would succeed to his father's estate and be made a *samurai*.

♪ The loyal O-Shō called at the oil-shop and met Hisamatsu. She told him her glad news, and eagerly talked of the good future that lay in wait for him. He would rise with one bound from the lowly position of a mere clerk to that of a *samurai*. The old woman's son was at that time visiting the oil-shop, and was greatly delighted to hear the news. The mother and son urged Hisamatsu to leave that day with them for the Ishizu Clan, which he reluctantly did. He fully appreciated his old nurse's loyalty and kindness. He also knew that it was his bounden duty to succeed to his father's estate, and that it was an honour and glory for a man to serve a *daimyo* as a *samurai*. But he could not help thinking of his sweetheart, who had determined to kill herself. It would be faithless of him to desert her at such a time, and selfishly enjoy such an honour, immediately after her death. In his eye, titles and emoluments, honour and glory were now nothing to him. He must keep his promise to O-Somé to the end.

Whilst they were on their way to the Ishizu

Clan, Hisamatsu forsook his fellow travellers unknown to them, and retraced his steps to the oil-shop. When he arrived, it was midnight, so he climbed over the wall into the courtyard. Suddenly he was startled to hear the sound of footsteps approaching, so he hastily hid himself in the warehouse close by. The black-hearted Kosuké had observed him; so creeping stealthily up, the ruffian rapidly shut and locked the door of the warehouse, and Hisamatsu was "caged like a bird" inside.

It seemed as if some divine intuition told O-Somé of this incident. She seized a lantern, and ran out into the courtyard. Hisamatsu saw her from the window of the warehouse.

"Is it you, dearest O-Somé?" he exclaimed involuntarily.

"Oh, Hisamatsu!" cried she looking up. "I cannot hope ever to become your wife in this world. I have made up my mind to kill myself, according to our promise. Do not fail, I implore you, to join me in my determination." With these words, she buried a dagger in her throat.

"My God!" exclaimed Hisamatsu, in amazement. He struggled with all his power to break

the bars of the window, with the intention of leaping down to her rescue; but all his efforts were in vain. Mad with grief and despair, he unsheathed a sword which he was wearing, and thrust it into his side. In a few moments the devoted lovers had both breathed their last.

The Battle of Ichi-no-tani

From

The Ichi-no-tani Futaba Gunki

By

Namiki Sōsuké

The Battle of Ichi-no-tani

I



ABOUT eight hundred years ago, a fierce war was waged between the two great clans, the Tairas and the Minamotos. The balance of fortune swayed some years towards the former family, and other years towards the latter. The stronger always ruled Japan with the reigning Emperor on their side. The Tairas, who had predominated for the previous twenty-five years, were at last driven out of Kyōto by the Minamotos. Kyōto was then the Imperial capital, and the expelled clan had been forced to take refuge in far-off Kyūshū. Afterwards they regained some of their pristine power, and came back to the province of Settsu. They formed a strong camp at Ichi-no-tani, a village on the shores of the Inland Sea, about fifty miles to the south-west of the metropolis. Nevertheless they were hardly in the position to make headway against the Minamotos.

Yoritomo, the chieftain of the Minamoto clan, had a younger brother, named Yoshitsuné. This warrior was at the head of the Minamoto troops stationed at Kyōto. Yoritomo ordered him to proceed to Ichi-no-tani to give the Tairas the *coup de grâce*.

Yoshitsuné was not only a brave and sagacious general, but also a man of humane character. His father Yoshitomo had been put to death, and several of his brothers had been either killed or cruelly persecuted by the Tairas. Notwithstanding this, he entertained no little sympathy and compassion toward the hostile clan.

During that time, the celebrated poet-laureate, Lord Shunzei was living. One of his best pupils was a brave warrior named Taira-no-Tadanori, and many excellent poems were found among his compositions. He had fled from Kyōto with the rest of the Taira family and was now in the camp at Ichi-no-tani. He reflected, one day, that there was no possibility of his clan's winning a victory in the forthcoming battle. He was sure that they were doomed to destruction. If he could only be successful in gaining the honour of having one

of his poems included in the *Senzai-Shū* or "Anthology for a Thousand Years," which his master was then collecting at the ex-Emperor's Go-Shirakawa's command, he should never regret falling in battle. With this determination he went stealthily back to Kyōto. When he arrived there, he called on Shunzei, and applied for the privilege of presenting a number of his best productions.

The poet expressed his hearty sympathy, and promised to think the matter over. After this Tadanori retraced his steps towards Ichi-no-tani. Shunzei did indeed fully recognize Tadanori's poetic talent. He thought that some of his poems deserved a place in the anthology. He could not help remembering, however, that as the Minamotos, the mortal enemies of the Tairas, were in the political ascendancy, and the latter had been declared "rebels," it might possibly offend the Minamotos if he were to grant Tadanori's request. Shunzei, therefore, thought it prudent to ask Yoshitsuné's opinion concerning the matter, and accordingly, he sent his daughter Kikuno-Mayé on the mission.

Yoshitsuné received from the young lady the

*tanzaku*¹ inscribed with one of Tadanori's masterpieces which read:

“Deep under weeds in ruin piled,
Shiga's imperial towers decay;
The lake's shores washed by wavelets mild
With saddening murmur, night and day;
But the wild cherry-trees of yore,
That decked the royal pleasance fair,
And witnessed grandeur seen no more,
Still bloom in dazzling beauty rare.”

The hero was struck with admiration at the poem. He said to Kikuno-Mayé:

“I have no objection to inserting such an excellent poem in the *Senzai-Shū*, my young lady. But there is a little matter I must think over before I can give any definite answer. Kindly leave this *tanzaku* with me. I will send my answer to both of you and Sir Tadanori, before long.”

Taira-no-Atsumori was an extremely handsome and refined young nobleman, sixteen years of age. His mother Fuji-no-Kata had been an inmate of the ex-Emperor Go-Shirakawa's harem. While she was in his service, her health had become deli-

¹ A *tanzaku* is an artistically prepared strip of moderately heavy paper, about two inches wide and twelve inches long, designed for the inditing of a short poem.

cate. Notwithstanding this, Go-Shirakawa had married her to his councillor Taira-no-Tsunémori. Soon after, her son Atsumori was born to her. Therefore, though Atsumori had been brought up as Tsunémori's son, he was, in reality, an Imperial Prince. Yoshitsuné was well aware of these circumstances, and thought of sparing the young nobleman's life in the impending battle, in some secret way or other.

The day came for Yoshitsuné to set out on his march against the Tairas' camp. A large number of officers and men, clad in shining armour, gathered together at his headquarters. Yoshitsuné summoned to his presence two brave officers, Kumagai Noazané and Okabé Rokuyata. He then tied Tadanori's *tanzaku* to a branch of cherry-blossoms, which was arranged in a vase on the *tokonoma* or alcove, and addressed Rokuyata in these words:

"Before our army reaches Ichi-no-tani, you will go ahead and meet Taira-no-Tadanori, and tell him that his poem will be included in the *Senzai-Shū*, in compliance with his request. He is, however, one of the so-called 'rebels,' so we cannot attach his name to it. It shall be registered as

'anonymous.' Present him with this branch of cherry-blossoms, tied with his *tanzaku*, and tell him that it signifies my acceptance of his poem. Don't fail to obey me, Rokuyata."

Yoshitsuné then produced a notice board.

"As you observe," he said to Naozané, "this notice reads: 'It is strictly prohibited to injure the cherry-blossoms. Any person breaking off one branch, shall be punished by having one of his fingers cut off.' I love and admire cherry-blossoms more than I can say. I have been told, that there are many beautiful cherry-trees at Ichino-tani, and I order you to set up this notice board under the cherry-trees before Atsumori's camp, and to take special care of them. I am sure, Naozané, that you fully understand my meaning. I am of the firm opinion that only a man of your thoughtfulness and mercy is equal to this task."

"I understand, my lord," was Naozané's reply. "I shall carry out your orders to the best of my ability."

Yoshitsuné's command to Naozané was a poetic conundrum, signifying that Atsumori, who might well be likened unto beautiful cherry-blossoms, should not be scattered to death by the storm of

battle. It was impossible for Yoshitsuné openly to give the order to Naozané, because Atsumori was one of the enemy. But Naozané readily took his hint, and made up his mind to spare the young nobleman's life. He had served the ex-Emperor sixteen years before. His wife, Sagami, had served Fuji-no-Kata as maid-of-honour, while the latter was still in Go-Shirakawa's harem, and both had received favours from Fuji-no-Kata. Therefore Naozané determined to save Atsumori, at any cost, to requite his former master's kindness.

II

IN the village of Ubara, in the province of Settsu, lived an old woman named Hayashi. She was formerly the wife of a certain Taira *samurai*. After her husband had run away, and his whereabouts become unknown, she entered the service of the poet Shunzei, and became nurse to his daughter Kikuno-Mayé. When her charge grew to be a young woman, Hayashi left her position and retired to her village. There she was now leading a lonely life.

One evening, a belated traveller knocked at her door and asked her to give him shelter for the night. She granted his request, and both were pleasantly surprised to find that they were old friends. He proved to be none other than Taira-no-Tadanori on his way back to Ichi-no-tani from calling on his master Lord Shunzei. Hayashi welcomed him heartily, and they chatted about what had happened to them since they had last met.

"Well," she said with sighs, "I have heard of

your relations with Lady Kikuno-Mayé. If it had not been for the war between the Tairas and the Minamotos, your marriage would have already taken place. My hearty sympathy is with you!"

Shortly afterwards, Tadanori retired into an inner room to rest for the night. When the hours were advanced, a violent storm broke out, in the midst of which was heard a hard knocking at the gate.

Hayashi awoke. "Who is there?" she cried.

"It is I—Kikuno-Mayé, my nurse. Excuse my disturbing your sleep."

When she heard the answer, the old woman leaped down to the courtyard, and opened the door.

"I am glad to see you," she said in tones of wonder. "How is it that you have come here alone through the storm at midnight?"

The girl wept. "Well," she said, "I have walked so far in pursuit of Lord Tadanori. Alas! I have been unable to overtake him. I don't know this neighbourhood well, so I have been wandering here and there in the darkness. It became late, and I had lost my way. However, with great difficulty I at last found my way to

your house. Now I cannot hope to overtake Lord Tadanori. What shall I do?"

"Be of good cheer, my lady. Lord Tadanori came here some while ago, and is still within."

"Is that true? I am very glad! Please let me see him quickly."

"Lord Tadanori is resting in the inner room. You can go and see him yourself."

Kikuno-Mayé went joyfully into the room.

Shortly afterwards a noise was heard within, and Kikuno-Mayé rushed out in tears. Hayashi was wonder-struck, and asked the reason. The girl explained that Tadanori had unkindly proposed that she should give him up, and return to her father's house. This filled her with sorrow and anger. The old woman vainly tried to soothe her. She wept unceasingly, and complained that her lover was cold-hearted. At that moment Tadanori came in.

"I fear that I seem unkind," he said, "but I assure you that it is entirely for your sake, and for your father's, dear Kikuno-Mayé. The Tairas are sure to be defeated in the coming battle, and I shall die in the fray. I am, therefore, convinced that you had better give me up, and return to your

home as soon as possible. I owe your father a very great deal, so if I take you with me, I am sure he will be suspected of taking sides with the Tairas, and then who can tell what punishment may befall him. I can't bear the thought of my benefactor suffering on my account. Weigh these reasons well, and return home for your father's, your own, and my sake. Frankly, I do not like to part from you, but there is no help for it. Please control your emotion, and listen to reason. I urge you to follow my advice."

"Oh, no!" she sobbed, clutching his sleeve, "how can I part from you when you are going to fight to the death? I will accompany you wherever you go. I swear I will never give you up. Permit me to share your lot in life or in death, my dear Lord Tadanori."

Tadanori was at a loss to know how to deal with Kikuno-Mayé, and Hayashi was equally puzzled how to comfort her.

At this moment the sound of war-cries was wafted in by the wind. A little later the sound was followed by the random beating of bells and drums. A party of soldiers appeared on the scene and their captain rushed up to the gate.

"Open!" he cried aloud. "I, Kajiwara Kagétaka, have had secret information that Taira-no-Tadanori is hiding in this house, and have come to take him prisoner. My troops have completely surrounded the dwelling, and there is no means of escape. I order him, therefore, to come out and become my prisoner peacefully."

Tadanori was not at all frightened. He bade Kikuno-Mayé and Hayashi keep within, and unsheathed his great sword.

"Pooh, Kagétaka!" he sneered, "your meanness and cowardice are past belief! Why did you not proceed to the battlefield instead of surrounding me with so many troops when I am alone? I am not such a weakling as to allow myself to be easily caught by you! Approach, and I will show you in what direction my abilities lie!"

So crying, the hero threw himself among the foes and fought desperately, now cutting and kicking, and then trampling on them. The latter were seized with fear, and retreated one after another. Kagétaka was also, in spite of his threatening attitude, seized with fear, and took to his heels.

Tadanori paused to take breath, and soon

afterwards the sound of bells and drums and war-cries was again heard.

"Confound it!" he said to himself, sighing deeply. "Kagétaka must be coming again with a large army. If I were on the battle-field, I should not fear even thousands of foes, but how can I defend myself against such a large force when I am in so small a house? Alas! on the one hand I am not certain whether I shall ever realize my dearest wish concerning my poem; on the other, it seems that I am to die an inglorious death at the hands of a craven fellow! It is a pity beyond expression!"

Presently a warrior of commanding appearance came in sight. He was not in armour, as had been expected, but in full dress. This consisted of a *suhō*, a *daimon*, and a *nagabakama*. He was none other than Okabé Rokuyata, an officer of General Yoshitsuné, who was referred to in the opening chapter. He saluted Tadanori politely, and with much grace.

"I am delighted to see you, Lord Tadanori," he began. "As the coming battle is to be fought in order to decide the destiny of the Tairas and the Minamotos, we ought to fight openly on the

battle-field. General Yoshitsuné is, therefore, extremely sorry to hear of Kajiwara Kagétaka's mean deed in privately attacking you when you were in your defenceless condition. But now as to my message. General Yoshitsuné admired your poem, selected by Lord Shunzei, very much. In accordance with your desire, he has ordered it to be included in the *Senzai-Shū*. But unfortunately you are branded as a 'rebel.' It is therefore considered improper that you should give your name, so your poem is inserted as 'anonymous.' "—With these words he offered Tadanori the *tanzaku* tied to a branch of cherry-blossoms.—“Here is a proof of the fact. General Yoshitsuné begs to present this to you, sir.”

When Tadanori heard the news, his joy knew no bounds. He received the *tanzaku* with great reverence.

“I accept this gift,” he said, “from General Yoshitsuné, and am deeply grateful.”

“To speak frankly,” continued Tadanori, “I feared that my poem would probably be rejected from motives of hostility. It has been accepted, however, through the sympathy and magnanimity of General Yoshitsuné. This is the greatest

honour that could possibly be given me. My great wish is attained, so I have nothing else to desire in this life. Taking into consideration that my days are numbered, I prefer being taken captive by you, an illustrious hero, to dying a disgraceful death at the hands of unknown soldiers"—he put his hands behind his back—"You are at liberty to bind me, sir."

"No, no," answered Rokuyata laughing, "I haven't come to arrest you. Shall we not fight each other on the battle-field? Do you think I am as mean a coward as Kagétaka?"

"Excuse my thoughtless words. Your generosity and that of General Yoshitsuné overwhelm me indeed. You are both noble *samurai*."

At this moment, the crowing of cocks proclaimed the dawn. Rokuyata rose to his feet.

"It will soon be morning," he said. "If you walk alone towards Ichi-no-tani, you may encounter further trouble. I shall conduct you to the camp. Please be in readiness."

Rokuyata gave orders to his soldiers, who brought before Tadanori a beautifully caparisoned steed, which had been brought for the purpose. Tadanori thanked him warmly, and without a

moment's hesitation seized the horse's mane, and sprang upon its back.

Kikuno-Mayé, who had been listening to all this, thought that this was the last moment she would ever see her lover. She ran out. "Wait one moment, Lord Tadanori," she cried.

Hayashi stood in front of her, and tried to conceal her. Rokuyata instantly perceived the truth. He cut off the right sleeve of Tadanori's robe, and handed it to the old woman. "I beg," said he, "to offer you this in acknowledgment of your having kindly lodged Lord Tadanori. If you find it of no use to yourself, please give it to anybody else who may desire it, madame."

This was intended as a hint that the sleeve was for Kikuno-Mayé, as a memento of her lover. The passionate girl almost burst into tears of gratitude. Tadanori carrying the branch of cherry-blossoms on his back, set out on his journey guarded by Rokuyata and his troops; but his heart remained with his sweetheart.

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A few days later, Yoshitsuné's army arrived at Ichi-no-tani, and a decisive battle was fought



Tadanon, carrying the branch of cherry-blossoms on his back, set out on his journey

between the two clans, in which the Tairas were completely defeated. During the first part of the battle Tadanori fought with great courage, and an entire company of the Minamotos' army began to give way before his mighty strokes. Suddenly a brave officer rushed to rally the wavering troops. It proved to be Rokuyata, who declared his name and challenged Tadanori to single combat.

"I am extremely glad to meet you here on the battle-field, Sir Okabé," replied Tadanori. "A thousand thanks for your kindness the other day. I take great pleasure in accepting your challenge."

They fought violently for a good while, but as they were evenly matched in fencing, they arrived at no result. They then threw down their weapons, alighted from their horses, and closed with each other. At last Tadanori, who possessed greater muscular strength, threw Rokuyata down, and held him at his mercy; but he hesitated to kill his benefactor. At this moment one of Rokuyata's retainers ran to his rescue, and with one blow cut off Tadanori's right arm. Tadanori begged Rokuyata to kill him immediately; whereupon Rokuyata burst into tears of sympathy, and

reluctantly struck off his head. He then proceeded to carefully examine the hero's person in the hope of finding something in the way of a written will. Instead of this, however, he found in his pocket a *tanzaku* with the following poem:

“ By darkness overta'en and spent,
Sore, sore, forspent and travelworn
The cherry-trees their shelter lent,
A refuge sweet to me forlorn.
As hosts and friends their blossoms fail
To-night will solace all my care.”

He was struck with the great beauty of the poem, and filled with admiration for Tadanori, because he had kept his poetic mood even in the midst of war. He afterwards kindly sent the *tanzaku* to Lord Shunzei.

This poem is still famous. It is familiar to every Japanese as the hero's masterpiece.

III

ATSUMORI, his foster-father Tsunémori, and his mother Fuji-no-Kata, who had shared the lot of the rest of the Taira clan, were now living at a temporary residence at Fukuhara, not far from Ichi-no-tani.

Tsunémori had an adopted daughter. Her name was Tamaori, and she was a beautiful damsel, fifteen years of age. He and his wife had brought her up from childhood. They loved her dearly, and intended her for Atsumori's wife.

The girl's real father, Tokitada, was a Taira. He was a mean man, and had early deserted the Taira clan whose fortunes were on the wane, and had gone over to the Minamoto clan, which was rising in importance. Now that the Tairas were on the verge of ruin, Tokitada had decided to take Tamaori back from Tsunémori's hands in order to marry her to Hirayama Suyéshigé, a *samurai* belonging to the Minamoto clan, in accordance with the latter's earnest proposal. He therefore

sent a *samurai* and two footmen to Tsunémori's residence, to secure the restoration of his daughter.

When the message arrived, Tsunémori and Fuji-no-Kata were both astonished and angry.

At last they resigned themselves to the unreasonable demand, and told the messenger to take Tamaori with him at once. The man caught the girl by the hand, and proceeded to place her in a palanquin which had been brought for the purpose. Suddenly she snatched his sword from him, and quick as lightning cut his shoulder. He fell to the ground with a groan. She sprang at him, and stabbed him in the throat, and he died immediately. When the footmen saw this sight they took to their heels.

Tsunémori and Fuji-no-Kata were struck with astonishment and admiration at Tamaori's brave deed. Insomuch as the girl had proved her devotedness and firm resolve, they thought it was their duty to marry her to Atsumori, as soon as possible.

To Tamaori's boundless joy, they immediately made the young couple exchange cups of marriage.

After the ceremony was over, Tsunémori respectfully prostrated himself before Atsumori.

"Lord Atsumori," he said, with tears in his voice, "you may have heard that you are not my son, but the son of His Majesty the ex-Emperor. His Majesty, I am sure, has been very anxious about your safety since the outbreak of the present war! I think you had better go back at once to Kyōto, with your mother and Tamaori, and call on your Imperial father as soon as arrangements can be made. Your filial duty demands this of you, I am sure. Pray make immediate preparations for your journey, Lord Atsumori."

A look of amazement came over Atsumori's face.

"Oh, no, my dear father!" he replied. "I may be the ex-Emperor's son, but you have brought me up since my birth. Your kindness to me is higher than the mountain, and deeper than the sea! How can I forsake my father, and take refuge in a place of safety, when the Tairas are on the eve of destruction? Nothing is further from my mind. Please allow me to accompany you to battle in some capacity or another, and share your lot, my father."

"It would seem at first that you are right in saying so. But you must remember that one's

duty to one's father is far greater than one's duty to one's foster-father. This is even greater when your father is an Emperor,"—Tsunémori assumed a look of firm determination—"If you do not listen to my advice, I am bound to commit *seppuku* as a token of apology to His Majesty the ex-Emperor."

Hereupon Atsumori reluctantly gave his consent, and retired into an inner room with Fuji-no-Kata and Tamaori, saying that he would hasten to prepare himself for his journey. Tsunémori was thus freed from his anxiety regarding his family. He therefore made up his mind to leave for the camp at Ichi-no-tani. At that moment a messenger came from the headquarters, urging him to go there without any delay. He wished with great thoughtfulness to save his family from unnecessary tears, so he departed with the messenger without so much as bidding them farewell.

Fuji-no-Kata was quite unaware of this, and shortly afterwards returned to the parlour for a few minutes' farewell talk with her husband. But she was surprised and disappointed to find that he was not there.

"Alas!" cried she. "Lord Tsunémori must

have gone to the battle without telling us! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

Tamaori, hearing her cries, rushed in. They both looked at each other in amazement and sorrow. Suddenly a loud neigh and a clattering of hoofs were heard.

The next moment Atsumori appeared on horseback, clad in red armour, and carrying a bow and arrows. On seeing him, Tamaori took a halberd down from the wall.

"Farewell, mother!" she said, springing down into the courtyard and standing beside Atsumori's horse.

"I cannot understand this," said Fuji-no-Kata to Atsumori. "What is the meaning of your attire, my son? Your father commanded you to return to the Capital."

"Yes, that is so," replied Atsumori, bowing his head. "But all the Tairas are determined to fight to the last. How, then, can I be so disloyal as to return to the Capital alone? I am determined to go to Ichi-no-tani, and die a warrior's death."

"Oh, that is indeed well spoken!" said Fuji-no-Kata, her spirits rising. "Your brave words fill me with delight! You are indeed my son!"

"You must not go to the battle, Tamaori," said Atsumori, "your place is at my mother's side."

"Your words are unkind, Atsumori Sama! We have only just exchanged our marriage cups, which we looked forward to for so long. Now you are going to battle, and wish to leave me behind. Wherever you go, I will accompany you. If my presence is a trouble to you, please kill me, and then go."

So saying, she caught his saddle, clung to his stirrup, and wept bitterly. Fuji-no-Kata was filled with compassion for her.

"Atsumori," she said, "you would be quite justified in taking Tamaori with you. As you know, all the Tairas have taken their wives and children with them. You had better set out with her immediately."

Tamaori was overjoyed to hear this, and caught Atsumori's reins.

Atsumori found that it was now impossible to refuse her entreaty, and bade her follow him.

"Farewell, mother," he cried and departed gallantly for Ichi-no-tani with his bride.

Soon afterwards a number of hostile soldiers burst into the house.

"Our Lord Hirayama has sent us," they cried, "with orders to carry away Lady Tamaori. Deliver her to us at once. If you offer the slightest resistance, you shall all die!"

Three of Fuji-no-Kata's maids, who heard these words, burst into hearty laughs. "What insolence!" they retorted. "How can we deliver you Lady Tamaori? She has just been married to Lord Atsumori. Besides, her Ladyship is absent. Don't waste any more of your time here, or you may be hurt. You had better go quickly."

When they had spoken this warning, they assumed the offensive. One of them brandished a halberd, another produced a long sword, and the third drew out a dagger. The soldiers were filled with fear at the skill with which the women wielded their weapons. Some of them were severely wounded, some mortally, and the rest took to flight.

But one of them, who was evidently their commander, held his ground and fought on bravely. Then Fuji-no-Kata seized her bow and, fitting an arrow, sent it flying with a loud twang. The man

immediately fell dead with a thud, shot through the heart. Then Fuji-no-Kata departed after her son towards the battlefield, accompanied by her maids.

IV

THE 'Tairas' camp extended from Ichi-no-tani on the west to Ikuta on the east. The rear of the camp was protected by a steep cliff, and in front of it stretched the seashore. From the bluff down to the beach, the position was fortified with a strong stockade. Over it, numerous red banners were streaming in the wind. Atsumori was guarding one important post, as substitute for his foster-father Tsunémori.

It was late one cold windy night. The moon shone dimly. Kojirō, the son of Kumagai Naozané, suddenly appeared in front of the gate of Atsumori's post. The young warrior had forced his way hither, spurred on by the ardent ambition to distinguish himself at the very first battle he had ever joined in. He had come along narrow passes, stumbling over stones, and entanglements of roots. As he desired to cut his way into the camp before any comrade of his followed him, he searched and searched about for some weak point through which to break. This was of no avail.

At that moment the sound of a flute and a *koto* or zither was heard from the inner part of the camp. As the wind had abated, and the waves subsided, the plaintive yet captivating strains were clearly audible. Kojirō unconsciously paused and listened intently for a while. "Those people have good taste," he thought to himself. "My parents told me that all the Tairas were tender-hearted, refined nobles. I find now that their words were not in any way exaggerated. The Tairas' refinement must be great for they keep quiet to-night on the eve of battle, and enjoy themselves with music,"—he burst into tears—"what an evil lot is mine, that I was born a rough warrior, and have to fight against such elegant men!"

Suddenly from behind, Kojirō heard the clattering of hoofs, and Hirayama Suyéshigé appeared on horseback. When he saw Kojirō, he alighted. "Hello, Kojirō," he said. "I have come here with the intention of winning for myself the reputation of being the first fighter. But out of admiration for your brave purpose, I abandon the honour in your favour. You must, therefore, cut your way inside the gate without a moment's

delay. If you hesitate, I will do so myself. You must be quick, young hero!"

The spirited youth, thus incited, replied: "Many thanks, Hirayama. I shall avail myself of your kindness."

He then stepped up to the gate, and knocking at it, cried in loud tones: "Within there! I am Kojirō, the son of Kumagai Naozané! I have come as the first fighter. I invite you, the Taira warriors, to meet me in single combat."

At the sound of his challenge, a sudden stir was heard within. The enemy opened the gate.

"Most certainly, sir," they cried. Kojirō immediately drew his great sword, and rushed in.

A little later, Kumagai Naozané, who seemed concerned about his son's adventure, ran up. He was greatly surprised to see Suyéshigé standing passive in front of the entrance.

"Is that you, Hirayama?" asked he. "Have you seen my son, Kojirō?"

"Yes, he was here a few moments ago," answered Suyéshigé. "I thought it dangerous for him to venture among the enemy, so I advised him to give up the idea. But he utterly defied

my words. The young man desperately fought his way into the camp."

When he heard these words, Naozané forthwith rushed in frantically like a "lion deprived of his cub." Suyéshigé was rejoiced at the success of his crafty plan.

"Pooh!" he whispered to himself. "Naozané and his son are now at the mercy of the enemy. They are 'caught like mice in a trap.' They are both proud of their bravery and loyalty, but are now doomed to destruction. By the time they have fought and been killed, I will march here with my large regiment. I shall surely then be victorious."

At this moment a sound of many voices was heard from within. The treacherous *samurai* was startled to hear this. He therefore assumed a defensive attitude. The next moment Naozané stepped out of the gate, supporting his son by the arm. "Hirayama," he said, "my son is wounded. I must carry him back to our camp for treatment. You may stay here and fight to your heart's content." With these words he ran away as quick as lightning, bearing his son in his arms.

Suyéshigé was disappointed at his frustrated

hope. He realized his dangerous situation. He therefore sprang on his steed, intending to go back to his camp.

A moment later, several soldiers with drawn swords sallied out of the gate, and surrounded him. A spirited combat at once ensued. Then Atsumori, gallantly clad in beautiful armour, rode forth, and cut at Suyéshigé. The latter found it impossible to fight any longer against such odds, so he spurred his horse, and beat a retreat. Atsumori alone galloped in hot pursuit of the fleeing warrior.

For some time Tamaori ran about along the beach in search of the young cavalier.

"Atsumori Sama! Atsumori Sama!" she cried. "It is dangerous for you to ride alone through the darkness of night. For pity's sake come back!"

By this time, day had begun to dawn. Suyéshigé, who had succeeded in making good his escape, was highly delighted to meet unexpectedly at this spot, the beautiful maiden for whom he had longed so passionately.

He alighted, ran up to her, and burst forth into the eloquence of ardent love. He said that as he had received a promise from her father, he would

take her with him as his wife. He tried to make her mount his horse. But Tamaori turned a deaf ear to all his professions of love. The impudent lover, however, still more fervently urged his suit, and attempted to take her by force. The girl was filled with despair and anger, and drawing her sword, she cut at him. He caught her wrist,

"Come, girl!" he threatened. "Answer me promptly. Will you be my wife or not. If you refuse, I shall take your life."

"May you be for ever cursed," said she. "You may kill me if you choose. Oh! Why doesn't some stronger warrior come and kill this beast?"

"This is more than I can stand," said Suyéshigé, whose patience was now exhausted. "I would rather kill this hussy than let her remain 'a flower in another's possession.' "

With these words he drew a dagger, and stabbed her in the breast. She immediately uttered an agonized groan, and fell back senseless. A moment later war-shouts were heard a little way off. Seized with sudden fear, he leaped on his horse and fled away.

The Tairas had been defeated in the previous night's engagement. They had been driven by



'You are a General of the Taira army, are you not?' he asked, holding up an open fan

degrees to the seashore, and had just embarked on the ships prepared for the purpose, and set sail for Shikoku. Atsumori had pursued Suyéshigé, but to his disappointment, had lost sight of him. He therefore rode back to his camp to join in the embarkation. It was too late, however, and not a single ship remained. He thereupon dashed on his horse into the waves, and attempted to reach the retreating ships.

At that moment someone hailed him from the beach. It was Kumagai Naozané, mounted on horseback. "You are a General of the Taira army, are you not?" he asked, holding up an open fan. "Only a coward shows his back to the enemy. Come back, and try your skill in a fight against me."

It was impossible for Atsumori to hesitate when addressed by one of the enemy. Without a moment's delay, he turned his horse back, and went ashore. Naozané rode to meet him. Both warriors drew their swords, and struck at each other for some minutes, their blades glittering in the rising sun. But as their combat was undecisive, Atsumori threw down his sword for a close fight. Naozané was filled with admiration

for his adversary's bravery, and also threw down his sword. No sooner had they grappled with each other, than they fell heavily to the ground. In an instant Naozané was holding Atsumori down.

When Naozané had Atsumori well under him, he said in kindly tones:

"Now that your fate is sealed, you must declare your name, in order that I may perform an exploit in killing you. If there is anything you wish done after your death, tell it to me frankly. I shall be pleased to send word to your family. As far as I am concerned, I am Kumagai Naozané, one of General Yoshitsuné's retainers."

"Your kindness fills me with gratitude," answered Atsumori in clear tones, indicative of satisfaction and peace of mind. "I am very fortunate to die by the sword of such a tender-hearted warrior as you! I am Atsumori, the son of Councillor Tsunémori. I fear that the news of my death will grieve my parents. I should deem it a kindness if you would send my corpse to them, Kumagai."

Naozané burst into tears. He helped Atsumori up on to his knees, and brushed the dust off his armour.

"If I spare your life," he said, "it will make no difference to the victory of the Minamoto army. Fortunately nobody is looking at us. You had better make your escape as quickly as you can." So saying, Naozané prepared to take leave of Atsumori. Suddenly Hirayama Suyéshigé appeared on a hill behind them.

"Stay, Kumagai," he cried. "You are a double-hearted villain. You cannot really intend to save the life of a Taira General whom you have beaten down! Don't stir there!"

Naozané paused on hearing this cruel rebuke, and for a moment did not know what to do.

"Don't trouble yourself, sir," said the young nobleman in mild tones. "The Tairas are doomed to ruin. I am sure to meet a disgraceful death some day or other, even if I am saved here. I much prefer to die by your sword. Kill me quickly, and then you will be cleared from the suspicion of your associate."

With these words he bent his head forward, and calmly awaited decapitation. Naozané saw that he had no alternative, so wiping his tears he rose to his feet.

"Now, permit me," he said. There was a flash of steel, and the next moment Atsumori's head fell from his shoulders.

Naozané held up the bloody head in his arms. He then cried in tones broken with sobs, "I, Kumagai Naozané, have taken the head of Atsumori, a famous general of the Taira clan."

Then a faint voice was heard to say, "~~Who~~ has killed Atsumori Sama? I can hardly believe such unhappy news. Let me see his face before I die."

It was Tamaori, who was lying on the beach, writhing in her death agonies. Naozané approached the dying girl. "Who is it that longs for Lord Atsumori?"

"I am Atsumori's wife Tamaori. Let me see his head, sir."

Taking compassion on her, the warrior handed her the head.

"Is this my Atsumori?" she said sobbing. "I long for a sight of his face, but I cannot see any longer." She closed her eyes, and pressed the head against her face, and embraced it. But her strength quickly failed her, until at last she expired.

When Naozané saw the pitiful sight of such a beautiful couple, cruelly cut off in the bloom of youth, he stood for a few moments, stupefied with sorrow.

V

THE question to be considered now is whether Kumagai Naozané actually killed Atsumori or not. If he had done so, he had disregarded General Yoshitsuné's instructions which had been hinted at on the notice board regarding cherry-blossoms. He could hardly have done this, for he was distinguished both for loyalty to the Imperial family, and for his sympathetic nature. If he did not kill the real Atsumori, who could it have been that he had killed on the beach of Ichi-no-tani?

In front of Naozané's camp at Ichi-no-tani, there stood a young cherry-tree which was now in full bloom. Under the tree stood Yoshitsuné's notice board, "It is strictly prohibited to injure the cherry-blossoms. Any one cutting off one branch shall be punished by having one finger cut off."

One day a middle-aged woman called at Naozané's camp. She was his wife Sagami. She had come from her home in the far-off province of Musashi, in order to see her husband and her

son, Kojirō. Naozané was out, and Kojirō was not to be seen.

While she was talking about her husband and her son with a *samurai*, who was in charge of the camp in Naozané's absence, there suddenly arose a noise outside the entrance. Then Atsumori's mother, Fuji-no-Kata, rushed into the camp, hotly pursued by the Minamoto soldiers. Sagami ran out in surprise, to meet her. They both looked into each other's face.

"You are Madame Fuji-no-Kata, are you not?" asked Sagami.

"And you, I believe, are Sagami."

Both were exceedingly delighted to meet each other, thus unexpectedly. As was previously mentioned, Sagami had served Fuji-no-Kata as maid-of-honour, sixteen years before, and Naozané had served the ex-Emperor at the same time. But at that time, Naozané's surname had been Sataké, so Fuji-no-Kata did not know that the famous Naozané and her former maid's husband were one and the same man. Therefore, as she talked with Sagami, she was amazed to learn the truth. It was Sataké who had killed her son Atsumori. He was her mortal enemy. She was

determined to be revenged on him for her son's death. She was almost overcome with sorrow and anger. She asked Sagami to remember their old relations of mistress and maid, and to assist her in her act of revenge. Sagami for a moment was at a loss to know what to say in reply. At last she decided that she would await her husband's return, and after she had learned under what circumstances he had killed Atsumori, she would decide her attitude. While she was thus trying to console Fuji-no-Kata, Kajiwara Kagétaka, the mean *samurai* who had tried to capture Tadanori, came in, accompanied by an old stone mason named Midaroku. He said that, with Naozané's assistance, he intended to examine the suspicious man who pretended to erect tombstones in memory of the Tairas who had fallen in battle. Sagami ushered him into the inner room, asking him to await her husband's return.

Soon after, Naozané returned and was surprised to see his wife.

"What! You here?" he asked with a look of displeasure.

"I felt anxious about Kojirō," she replied. "I wanted to obtain information about him, so I

walked farther and farther, until I found myself in the Capital. When I arrived there, I heard that the battle was at its height. My motherly affection at last induced me to turn my steps here."

"Pshaw!" interrupted Naozané angrily. "When a warrior goes to battle, he cannot expect to return ~~alive~~. What would you have done if Kojirō had fallen on the field?"

"I should be filled with joy, if he, in his first battle, had fallen fighting with a distinguished warrior."

"Kojirō was spurred by the ambition of gaining the fame of being the first fighter. He therefore singly cut his way into the Taira camp. He was wounded, but——"

"He was wounded? Was his wound trifling or severe? Was he mortally wounded?"

"Would you be grieved if you heard that he was mortally wounded?"

"No, if I thought that he had fought so hard as to be wounded, I could not fail to be joyful. I should not sorrow at all."

"I carried the wounded youth in my arms, and took him back to my camp. When I was again

going to the enemy's camp, I killed Lord Atsumori, a young Taira General."

Sagami was taken aback at hearing these words. Fuji-no-Kata had overheard this, and rushed forth with a drawn dagger.

"Prepare for death, enemy of my son," she cried, stabbing at Naozané.

The surprised hero caught the lady by the ~~arm~~.

"Who are you?" he roared with a look of fury, "that call me 'enemy.'"

"Oh, my husband," said his wife. "Be more courteous. This lady is Madame Fuji-no-Kata."

Naozané, amazed, leaped back and made a low obeisance to Fuji-no-Kata. The lady burst into tears.

"Although you killed him in battle," she said, "it was cruel of you to take the life of a mere stripling like my son, Naozané"—she raised her dagger again—"Sagami, assist me in my stroke of revenge!"

"Wait just a moment, madame," said Sagami, with an anxious look. "I am sure, my husband, that you had some profound reason for killing Lord Atsumori, of whose birth you are well-informed. Pray tell us your reason, as quickly as you can."

Naozané drew himself up with dignity. "Madame," he said, "I will remind you that the present war is being conducted in accordance with an Imperial edict for the subjugation of the Tairas. It is not a private affair. We are not allowed to make any distinction of persons. You must not blame me if I have dared to kill Lord Atsumori. I did my best to spare his life, but——"

He thereupon gave them a detailed account of the circumstances under which he had been obliged to kill the young nobleman. After hearing it, Fuji-no-Kata quite understood the situation, and her anger was much pacified.

"Madame Fuji-no-Kata should not stay here any longer," said Naozané. "You must conduct her to some place of safety."

He rose to his feet with the *kubi-oké*—a case for containing a head—in his hand.

"With your leave, madame, I will take Lord Atsumori's head to the headquarters, for General Yoshitsuné's inspection."

"One moment, husband," said Sagami, catching Naozané by the sleeve. "Pray allow Madame to glance at Lord Atsumori's face. It will be the last opportunity she will have of a glimpse of it

in this life." Fuji-no-Kata added her entreaties for a glance at the head.

"I deeply regret that I cannot obey your orders," Naozané said sternly. "An official identification of the head must be made before I can show it privately to anyone." He pushed both women aside, and stepped outside. At that moment a voice was heard.

"Naozané," it said, "you will be spared the trouble of taking Lord Atsumori's head to the headquarters. Yoshitsuné will inspect it here." Yoshitsuné himself then appeared on the scene. Naozané respectfully prostrated himself before him.

"I thought it strange and suspicious," said Yoshitsuné, "that you have not only delayed to present the head for my inspection, but you also abruptly asked to be allowed to retire from the army before the end of the battle. I therefore stealthily came here, and saw all that has just happened. I will now make haste to inspect the head."

Naozané ran out, and pulled out the notice board under the cherry-tree. He then placed Atsumori's head on it, and set it before Yoshitsuné, saying in tremulous tones:



Mr. Kōshirō as *Kumagai*

"Will your lordship deign to inspect this head, which I have taken, so far as I can judge, in accordance with your instructions. Tell me, I beg, if I have hit the mark, or if I have erred, my lord."

Yoshitsuné made a careful examination of the head.

"Oh, well done, Naozané," he said, bursting into tears. "This is indeed Atsumori's head. You have rightly judged how much I love the cherry-blossoms. You have my heartiest sympathy and admiration. Now, the bereaved relatives may take a farewell look at the head."

"Come, wife," said Naozané, handing the head to Sagami.

"Let Madame Fuji-no-Kata see Lord Atsumori's head."

Sagami received the head. She gave one glance at it, and immediately became speechless with consternation. Fuji-no-Kata was also struck dumb with horror. Sagami's dismay was not to be wondered at. The head was not that of Atsumori, but of her own son Kojirō. Atsumori, who had been believed to have been killed, was alive, while Kojirō who had been supposed to be living was dead. But they were puzzled to know how

and when Naozané had substituted Kojirō for Atsumori.

Then Naozané with fast falling tears, gave the required explanation. After he had solved Yoshitsuné's riddle on the notice board, he had determined to save Atsumori at the sacrifice of his beloved son, who had heartily joined in his father's scheme, and had willingly offered himself up for the sake of loyalty. Naozané had let Kojirō cut his way singly into the Taira camp, merely as a means to accomplish his purpose. He himself had followed his son among the enemy with the pretence of saving him. He had carried Atsumori, dressed in Kojirō's armour, to his camp, on the pretext that he was wounded. By that time he had substituted Kojirō for Atsumori. Therefore it was Kojirō disguised as Atsumori who had fought with Hīrayama Suyéshigé, and had made him take to flight. It was also the disguised Kojirō whom Naozané had killed on the beach of Ichino-tani, addressing him as Lord Atsumori, in the most polite language, and behaving most courteously towards him. He had done this purposely, so that neither his enemy, nor his comrades might perceive the truth. Briefly, Naozané had skil-

fully fulfilled Yoshitsuné's instructions to secretly save Atsumori.

Naozané's pathetic story overwhelmed all his listeners. When he had finished Kagétaka, who had brought in the stone-mason some time before, suddenly appeared on the scene.

"I have overheard," he cried, "that both Lord Yoshitsuné and Naozané have traitorously saved Atsumori, a general of the enemy. His Excellency Lord Yoritomo shall at once be informed of this." He began to turn his steps outward. Suddenly a dart came flashing through the air, and lodged in his throat. He fell dead on the spot. The next moment the old stone-mason appeared.

"It is I who have caused the death of this rascally nuisance," he said. "I did it in order to set you all at ease. Farewell, I will see you again." With these words he prepared to depart. Yoshitsuné bade him stop.

"Old man," he said, "before you go, I have something to present you with. Here it is, you must take great care of it."

He pointed to a large armour-chest placed in the alcove.

"Many thanks, my lord," replied the mason, "but may I not examine the contents before I accept it?"

He removed the lid, and looked into the chest. He at once started back in amazement, and then quickly replaced the cover with an anxious look. The coffer contained the delicate young warrior Atsumori, whose concealment therein, the sagacious Yoshitsuné had perceived.

The old man in question was a Taira warrior named Munékiyo, in disguise. After his clansmen had left the capital, and been defeated in several battles, he had secretly retired from the army. He had then become a stone-mason, with the intention of getting tombstones erected for those Tairas who had fallen in battle. Yoshitsuné owed his life to this old man. Many years before, when he was a baby, his mother had wandered from place to place, carrying him in her bosom. She had at last been discovered by the Tairas. But Munékiyo had sympathized with them, and by his intermediation they were both saved from death. Now, as he wished to repay his benefactor, Yoshitsuné gave him Atsumori hidden in the chest. He then ordered him to conduct Fuji-no-

Mr. Yanozō



Mr. Yanozō as *Kumagai*

Kata back to Kyōto. The old *samurai* wept for gratitude.

Naozané, having killed his beloved son, was weary of the military profession. He resolved to forsake the world, and spend the remainder of his days in praying for the soul of the deceased. That very day he had obtained Yoshitsuné's permission to retire from the army. He thereupon became a Buddhist priest, and prepared to start on a pilgrimage to the holy places throughout Japan. His sorrow-stricken wife was also weary of life, and became a nun, with the determination of accompanying her husband. Both were on the point of setting out on their journey, when they looked at each other, and calculated Kojirō's age.

"Alas!" they exclaimed, "these sixteen years have passed away like a dream."

They again burst into tears.

The Sufferings of Miss "Deep-Snow"

From

The Shō-utsushi Asagao Banashi

By

Yamada Kagashi

The Sufferings of Miss "Deep-Snow"

I



At an easy distance from Kyōto flows the Uji River whose valley is famous as the haunt of fireflies. A unique phenomenon is presented by these insects, glittering in myriads above the stream which, for the greater part of its course, meanders between picturesque lines of hills. On summer evenings the place is the resort of throngs of people bent on enjoying this brilliant spectacle.

Early one evening in the far-off days of the Ashikaga Shogun, a handsome young *samurai* and a Buddhist priest might have been seen, seated on a bench of a tea-house overlooking the Uji River. They had given themselves up to admiring contemplation of the beautiful landscape, now bathed in the gold of the setting sun. It was clear that they were waiting until the coming of darkness should bring the view of the luminous insects.

As time went on, the young warrior fell to writing on a *lanzaku*¹, and passed it to his friend, who read from it the following poem²:

“On yonder arch that spans the stream,
Where festive throngs pass to and fro,
Sweet must it be to feel, I deem,
The cool and gentle breezes blow.”

The poem seemed to make a strong appeal to the imagination of the shaveling. Time and again he ran his eye over it before putting the paper down on the bench at his side. Then suddenly a vagrant puff of wind caught and carried it off. For a moment it floated in air, then fluttered down into a pleasure-boat that lay moored to the shore.

The *samurai* in question bore the name of

¹ A *lanzaku* is an artistically prepared strip of moderately heavy paper, about two inches wide and twelve inches long, designed for the inditing of a short poem, or for the painting of a picture. A man of taste often takes a few of these strips with him, when visiting places noted for flowers or fireflies, and writes on them versicles of 31 or 17 syllables, composed on the spur of the moment, when the imagination is excited by sights of beauty.

² The original is trite in thought as may be inferred from this rendering, but the poem may justly be looked on as noteworthy, in that it is a very clever imitation, in similarity of diction and phrasing and of construction generally, of a famous poem in the *Kokinshū*, or “Poems, Ancient and Modern” (an anthology compiled in A.D. 905 at the mandate of the Emperor Daigo).



The young warrior fell to writing on a *tanzaku*

Miyagi Asojirō. He was a retainer of Ōuchi Yoshi-oki, the governor-general of Chinzei, whose feudal hold dominated the town of Yamaguchi, in Suwō, a province whose eastern shores are washed by the Inland Sea. Although a young man about twenty-five, Asojirō had already a great name in his clan for intelligence and for proficiency in military arts. He was now studying literature in Kyōto, at that time the capital both of the Emperor and of the Shogun. To-day he was here, on the bank of the Uji, with his bosom friend, Gessin, the priest, to enjoy a relaxation from his studies.

At the moment when Asojirō's *tanzaku* reached the boat in its zigzag flight there arose from the little craft the sound of a *samisen* or guitar, accompanied by a song in a voice of exquisite sweetness. Captivated by the strains the young soldier listened with attentive ear till some time had passed, and a sigh escaped him as he turned at last to his companion and said:

"Voice and music are alike charming, my friend, in the extreme. The possessor of such a voice must be a paragon of beauty. It's a great shame that we cannot sit by her side to listen."

"Oho!" returned the priest, with a laugh. "Even our sober-sides unbends! You seem to have developed a great interest in music. Ah, well, but what a ninny I am! I have clean forgotten an important service to be held this very night. With your permission I will take myself off. See that you enjoy yourself. Good-bye," and with this cheery parting the priest hurried off to his temple duties.

The singer in the boat was a girl of seventeen endowed with surpassing beauty. She was Miyuki ("Deep-Snow"), the only daughter of Akizuki Yuminosuké, at one time chief adviser of the Kishido Clan in Aki, a province which lies adjacent to that from which Asojirō hailed. Circumstances had obliged him to resign his post and he was then living at Kyōto in comfortable retirement.

Now the strains of Miyuki's guitar had ceased. Asaka ("Light Fragrance"), her nurse, picked up the *tanzaku*, which had lodged on the gunwale of the boat, and handed it to her young mistress who perused it with curiosity. The beauty of the poem and of the handwriting excited her admiration, and in obedience to an involuntary impulse she looked up to the bank above. Her

eyes by chance met those of Asojirō, who was looking down upon the boat, and in that momentary interchange of glances there sprang up within them an ardent desire each for the other.

At this moment, arrived two *samurai*, the worse for drink, who leapt into Miyuki's boat without a preliminary, "By your leave." With churlish rudeness they desired her to supply them with *saké*, demanding that she serve them with her own hands and entertain them with music while they drank. To all appearance a refusal would excite them to resort to any violent deed. So Asaka implored them not to press their demands on the shrinking girl, but her polite entreaties only had the result of driving them to greater length in rudeness. At this Asojirō could no longer contain himself. He made his way to the boat and spoke to the ruffians at first in a tone of mild remonstrance. But far from lending an ear to his exhortations, they began to revile him bitterly and finally raised their hands in act to strike. With the quickness of thought, Asojirō pinioned their arms and threw them prostrate with a kick. This display of great physical strength was too much for their courage. They

turned tail, slunk up the bank and precipitately took to their heels. Asojirō was minded to pursue them in their flight, but at Miyuki's earnest entreaty he gave up the idea.

"Please sit down and think no more about it," she said, extending a *saké* cup toward him. "I cannot find words to convey to you my gratitude for your timely interference. I am sorry indeed that we have nothing tempting to set before you, but allow me to offer you some wine."

"You are very kind, but I really must be going."

Here Asaka broke in. "Pray do not leave us so soon," said she. "As you see, we are all of us women, and it is to be feared that other miscreants may break in upon our privacy. I am sorry to impose upon your good nature, but let me beg of you to remain with us until our boatmen return."

"In that case," said Asojirō, "it will give me great pleasure to remain in your company."

Soon the three were exchanging cups and talking merrily. Asojirō revealed to the girl his name and circumstances and she reciprocated with a similar confidence. Miyuki's heart was bounding with joy and she seemed to wish to make a further revelation, but hesitated in expressing it. The

astute Asaka was aware of this and stepped ashore with the other maid, giving as a pretext her desire to stroll along the bank awhile.

Asojirō and Miyuki were thus left alone, sitting face to face. The girl drew forth a beautiful fan, adorned with a design of morning-glories painted on a golden ground. She desired the young *samurai* to write some words beside the picture as a souvenir of this happy meeting. Asojirō replied that his writing would only deface the beautiful fan, but that he could not find it in his heart to refuse her earnest request. Thereupon he wrote the following poem, and restored the fan to her.

"The morning-glories are fresh and sheen,
Embossed with drops of sparkling dew;
But well-a-day! the sunlight keen
Bids fair to blight their lovely hue.
Oh, how I wish a kindly shower
Would fall, to save the charming flower!"

"Oh! it is a lovely song! lovely indeed!" cried Miyuki, in an excess of delight. "I will keep this fan about me all my life, as an amulet, I will, indeed!" And with that she wrote in turn upon

a *tanzaku* and handed it to Asojirō, with downcast eyes.

“For him I long, nigh past control,
Who’s barred from me and from my heart;
Would that a pitying breeze would start,
And waft to him my love and soul!”

At sight of this poem Asojirō comprehended her meaning and said:

“Is it possible, Miyuki, that you have such a regard for me who am only a humble *samurai*?”

The girl blushed rosy red as she responded: “Oh, Asojirō, you are the only desire of my heart. Pray—.” But with that came a long embrace and vows of eternal fidelity.

But suddenly a raucous voice bawling, “Asojirō! Master Asojirō!” broke in upon the blissful conversation of the young lovers. This ill-timed interruption came from Asojirō’s henchman, Shikanai, who brought a letter, sent in urgent haste by his master’s uncle, Komazawa Ryōan. This letter had been carried post haste by a messenger from Asojirō’s native town. The gist of the letter was that his liege lord, Ōuchi Yoshi-oki, then domiciled at Kamakura, the seat of the

government of the *Kanryō* or Vice-Shogun, had abandoned himself to indulgence in wine and loose women. Deaf to all expostulations of his retainers, he had, in an access of rage, killed one of them who had remonstrated too strongly. The letter further stated that as Asojirō's uncle distrusted his own tact and ability to cope with this crisis, it was his intention to adopt Asojirō as heir to his estates, and to resign his office in his favour. He enjoined the young man to proceed to Kamakura and to do his utmost, in virtue of his office as Chief-Councillor, to win back Yoshioki, his lord, to sobriety and decorum, but before leaving for Kamakura, he was to make all haste to his native town and there confer with his uncle as to further details.

It was clear that the situation did not admit of a moment's delay on the part of Asojirō who owed everything to his uncle. In spite of the promptings of his heart, which urged him to linger in his sweetheart's company, in spite of the maiden's entreaties that he would prolong his stay, he forced himself to say, with a sigh:

"It grieves me more than I can tell to leave your side so soon, but it is out of my power to

refuse. Cherish as a souvenir of me that fan of yours on which my song is written, and wait with all patience till I join you again and claim you as my bride. Bide ever true to me, Miyuki mine." As he spoke the boatmen appeared and, with a last farewell to Miyuki, he hurried away with his servant, leaving the girl in tears.

II

MIYUKI's father, as we have mentioned before, had been Chief-Councillor of the Kishido Clan in the province of Aki. The lord of this clan had become infatuated with a beautiful concubine, O-Ran ("Orchid") by name, and had given himself up to all manner of sensual pleasures to the utter neglect of government. Yuminosuké had time and again remonstrated with him but his pleadings fell upon deaf ears; and finally the old councillor had resigned his post, and was now leading a life of comfort and ease at Kyōto.

One evening a man spent with running presented himself at the door of Yuminosuké's house. This was one of his old friends, a *samurai* of the same clan, and he had brought a weighty message from Yuminosuké's former lord. The latter in fact had been going on in his evil courses from bad to worse. At the instigation of the scoundrelly Ashigara Denzō, a younger brother of his concubine O-Ran, he had laid heavy burdens of taxation upon the people and had exacted contributions

of gold and treasures from the wealthy, with no other object than to acquire funds wherewith to glut his vices. The people of the clan, goaded to discontent, had risen in revolt, mobs had marched upon the lord's castle and the disturbance they were creating was beyond description. No one but Yuminosuké was equal to the task of quelling the rebellion; so it was the order of the lord that he should return to the clan, and re-establish peace and order.

As Yuminosuké was loyalty itself, he at once expressed his intention of obeying the command, and as the crisis was one that demanded instant action, on his part, he left Kyōto that same night and took ship at Ōsaka *en route* to his province. This was two or three days after his daughter, Miyuki, had parted from her lover on the Uji River.

The vessel in which Yuminosuké and his family were sailing homeward lay becalmed one night in Akashi harbour in the province of Harima. While they waited for a wind, by a strange coincidence, the ship that carried Asojirō, also proceeding homeward, anchored by their side, gunwale to gunwale. The moon shone full and the haven

presented a picturesque appearance. Asojirō went up on deck and there, deep in reverie, stood looking up at the moon's bright face.

In the neighbouring vessel all were asleep save Miyuki alone. She had not yet retired and, her little heart full of thoughts of her lover, she was singing his "morning-glory" song to the strains of a *koto* or zither. As the song came to his ears Asojirō inclined his head and looked wonderingly down into the other ship. At that very moment Miyuki cast her eyes upon the deck of Asojirō's vessel.

"Surely it is Miyuki that I see?"

"Oh! can it possibly be you, Asojirō?"

Before this question had passed her lips, Miyuki had sprung into the other ship and the pair of faithful lovers were rejoicing at their meeting, thus miraculously brought about. To explain her presence there Miyuki recounted to Asojirō the circumstances that had led to her voyage home, then added with emotion:

"This meeting of ours in a manner so unforeseen shows that ours is a union that brooks no separation, that some mysterious bond links us one to the other. It is my hope that, for the

future, where you go I also go. Grant me this, Asojirō, my lord."

"It rejoices me to hear you speak like that, my dear," replied Asojirō, "but I am now on my way home charged with a weighty mission that affects the very destiny of my lord. My duty as a *samurai* forbids my carrying a sweetheart with me. But we cannot fail to meet again. Let us wait against that time, Miyuki."

But the girl set her face against this proposal. "If you do not grant my request," she said bitterly, "I shall find no joy in life! The best thing I can do is to make an end of living!" And with this she drew herself together to plunge into the sea. But Asojirō caught her in his arms.

"My darling," said he, "if your heart is so set upon me, I shall take you with me to my home, let the world say against me what it will! But surely it will be a great grief to your parents if you thus take to flight, all unknown to them. Had you not better leave them a letter, my dear?" As he spoke, he felt in his bosom for a pen and paper but found none.

"Ah!" he said, sorely perplexed. "I must have dropped them into the water just now,

when I held you in my embrace. What is to be done!"

"Well," said Miyuki, "it is fortunate that my parents and all the others on board are fast asleep. I will return with all stealth to our ship and write a letter there. Soon I will be back, so wait for me only a little while."

As she said this she leaped back into the other vessel, but alas! wakened by the sound of her footsteps, the crew of Asojirō's ship aroused themselves, stirred up, and shouted: "Aha! a wind at last! Up anchor! Let out the sail!"

Miyuki heard these shouts with frantic grief, but as she writhed in sorrow and despair, the ship that carried Asojirō drew farther and farther off. Scarce knowing what she did, she threw into the receding vessel the fan whereon the morning-glories were painted, and thus again these passionate lovers were separated by Fate.

III

IN no long time after his return to his clan Aki-zuki Yuminosukó had achieved his task of quelling the popular uprising. This won for him great favour with his lord, and in recognition of his signal services he had conferred upon him again the office of Chief-Councillor. His fellow clansmen, too, looked up to him with love and respect. But amid all his success he fell short of happiness, for his beloved daughter, Miyuki, had lapsed into a profound melancholy. Day and night, with all her heart, she pined for Asojirō, and her eyes were never free from tears.

It happened one day that Yuminosukó was not at his house, having gone to the castle. Taking advantage, it is likely, of his absence, Ashigara Denzō chose this time for a call. He was a knave, outrageous in his manners, who set everybody at naught and, presuming on the position of his sister O-Ran, lorded it over his colleagues. He had long looked upon Miyuki with eyes of love, and had many a time, through a middleman,

asked for her hand in marriage, but all to no avail. But now the importunate suitor had come in person, bent upon receiving a favourable reply. With arrogant insistence he urged the girl's mother, Misao ("Chastity"), to give an instant consent to his suit. The old lady, in all courtesy, besought him to grant a postponement of the decision, on the plea of her husband's absence and the indisposition of Miyuki herself. But her pleading was thrown away upon Denzō. He rose to his feet declaring that he would make his way into the girl's chamber, to see for himself whether she was ill or not. Woman though she was, Misao could not brook this insolence.

"Remember, Denzō," she cried, "that this house is Akizuki Yuminosuké's castle. Rudeness such as yours I cannot put up with."

With this angry exclamation she snatched a halberd that hung on the wall, shook it from its sheath, and levelled it full at the dastard's heart. At this danger, he was struck with consternation and cried out: "Oh, I beg a thousand pardons, Madame! Since Miyuki is really ill, I shall call again. Again I beg your pardon!" And with that he beat an instant retreat.

Shortly after the departure of this suitor, Yuminosuké returned home in the best of spirits. His wife received him at his entry, with an enquiry as to his lord's health.

"Oh! his lordship is very well indeed, my dear," returned Yuminosuké, beaming with smiles, "and my attendance to-day seemed to give him special delight, so that he even bestowed upon me cups of *saké*. But I have a piece of good news for you. My news is this: In my lord's presence I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Komazawa Jirōzayémon, a *samurai* who has come on a mission of importance from the Yamaguchi Clan. He is young, of exceptionally fine appearance, and, better than all, an adept in military arts and well-versed in literature. Our lord seems to hold his character in the highest esteem. While we all three drank together, we talked with the utmost frankness. Our lord, who has very much in mind the marriage of our daughter, inquired of this gentleman if he was a married man. On receiving an answer in the negative, our lord spoke in the highest terms of Miyuki's person and character, and signified his willingness to use his efforts as middleman to bring about the marriage of this

young *samurai* with our daughter. Strange to say, the young man without the least hesitation accepted this proposal, abrupt as it was, and expressed himself so heartily grateful. As for me, I was too much filled with joy to think of declining this gracious proffer. So in the presence of our lord, I exchanged with Komazawa Jirōzayémon cups of betrothal and now it falls upon you to impart to Miyuki the news of this arrangement and fill her cup of happiness. The sooner you do this the better."

To tell the truth, the joy and gratitude of the wife were extreme at hearing of her lord's good offices; but still she harboured some misgivings as to her daughter's inclination in the matter.

"This is joyful news to me, my dear," she said, "and a right good match it would be. But if you will pardon the frankness of my words, I should think that you acted somewhat rashly in accepting this match without sounding Miyuki's wishes beforehand. Is it not so?"

"Well, that idea did occur to me, my dear, but the proposal comes from our lord, and the bridegroom-to-be is so superior both in looks and intelligence that I cannot doubt that he will find favour

in Miyuki's eyes. Make your mind easy on that point." And without further words the father retired to the inner room to rest.

Misao had gathered from her maids that Miyuki had been passionately in love with Asojirō, ever since her visit to the Uji River, and in her motherly sympathy had it in mind to do her best to ascertain the lover's whereabouts and bring about his marriage to her daughter. But now that Yuminosuké had formally betrothed his daughter in the presence of his lord, the engagement was too binding to be broken. So Misao came to the conclusion that there was nothing left for her but to break the news of the arrangement to Miyuki and prevail on her to submit. And tell her she did.

"You see," she continued in kind and consoling tones, "our lord himself has condescended to select a bridegroom for you; and I am told that the bridegroom of his choice is a thorough gentleman, an adept in military arts and of very handsome person. With all this you surely ought to give a ready consent. But a little time ago the black-hearted Denzō presented himself here, and insistently urged his suit for your hand and it

was no easy task for me to get rid of him by threats. I fear that, presuming upon his sister's influence, he will try to steal a march upon us again with some unreasonable demand. If the news of your betrothal comes to his ear he is certain to try to frustrate it. So your wisest course is to give a prompt consent to your father's arrangement. Can you think that we could do anything to the detriment of our beloved daughter? It is best for you to entrust everything to us. Come, daughter, speak up quickly and say that you consent! But there is a matter about which I wish to ask your father's advice. I shall be back in a moment, my dear." With that the old lady disappeared into the inner room to see her husband.

Ill-fated Miyuki! She did not know of the adoption of her lover Miyagi Asojirō, by his uncle, and the consequent alteration of his name to Komazawa Jirōzayémon. To her Jirōzayémon and Asojirō were different men. Hence her mother's words struck despair into her heart. She reflected that at all costs she must hold to her vows with Asojirō. In accordance with the precept that "a chaste woman never marries twice," she ought not to enter into marriage with another

man. But her father, through the good offices of her lord, had now betrothed her to a stranger! No way of escape was left for her as long as life endured. So finally she formed the desperate resolve to take her own life, that so she might to the end remain faithful to Asojirō. Thereupon, all in tears, she set herself to writing letters to her parents, and her nurse, imparting to them her melancholy purpose, and imploring their forgiveness for her disobedience. This done, she softly made her way down to the courtyard, and stole out through the postern gate, while yet the evening bell was mournfully tolling the departing day, and the air was full of the saddening cries of birds winging their way to their nests.

No long time had passed when Asaka, candlestick in hand, entered Miyuki's room, crying, "Miyuki! Miyuki!" but her charge was nowhere to be seen. Everywhere she searched, and what was her amazement to find on the desk a letter in Miyuki's hand, bearing the superscription: "Left to my Dear Parents!" In answer to her piercing cry: "My lord! My lady!" Yuminosuké and Misao rushed into the room. The father made no delay in opening the ominous

letter, which was couched in some such terms as these:

"MY DEAR PARENTS:

I have exchanged vows of betrothal with Miyagi Asojirō. To marry another man would mean the violation of my duty as a chaste woman. Therefore I have come to the resolve to end my life by drowning in some stream. Let my disobedience meet with your forgiveness.

Your daughter, devoted to death,

MIYUKI."

Great was the astonishment of the parents. Yuminosuké, all in a panic, could only say: "Good heavens! what a blunder I have made! But Miyuki, I hope, is not yet far off. Let search be made for her at once!" His faithful servant Sekisuké and the other members of the household were despatched in all directions in quest of the girl, and grief and horror filled the minds of all.

IV

MIYUKI, after stealing out of her father's house, ran in blind haste, staggering and stumbling in continual fear of pursuit and capture. But as she ran she was so unlucky as to be overtaken by two reprobates who were fain to kidnap her. With some difficulty she made shift to escape from their toils, and at last found herself on the bank of the Osé River. The winter moon, like "an old bepainted carline," was shedding on the stream its weird beams, and the leafless branches of the willow-trees on the bank were trembling in the wind.

This river the girl had chosen to be her grave. Taking hold of one of the willow-boughs, she was just in act to leap into the stream, when suddenly she felt herself firmly grasped and held. Her captor was an old woman. Miyuki struggled hard to shake her off, crying: "I pray you, let me go." But the old crone grasped her only the more firmly and said in ingratiating tones: "My dear young lady, you seem to be travelling alone. It is

a lover that leads you on this chase, I suppose. But if you choose to live, there is no reason in the world why you should not in the end join your lover. I give you my word, I will search him out and bring about your meeting. Take no rash step, my girl!"

Miyuki, innocent and simple minded as she was, had no suspicion of any trick on the part of the old woman, and lent a ready ear to her plausible words. She had no more thought of suicide.

At this moment, the two scoundrels, who had molested her before, appeared, and after scanning Miyuki's features said: "Oh! here you are! This time you shall not escape us. Come along, wench!" They would have carried her off indeed, had not the old woman thrust them aside, and with a menacing look roared out: "What is your business with this girl?"

"What, old beldame! The girl belongs to us because she is a bird limed on our twig. Come, pass her over to us!"

With that, the two caitiffs set upon the old woman. But lo and behold! she pinioned their arms and sent all two to the ground with a thud. Though her strength alarmed them, they rose to

their feet and prepared to renew the attack. But she flung at their feet a packet, crying the while: "There is the girl's ransom!" The ruffians were startled at the jingling sound that they heard when the packet fell. They picked it up and found in it ten gold coins. With a muttered grumble, "It's small enough, but we'll take it," they took themselves off.

The old woman, casting a quick glance around, produced a whistle on which she blew shrilly. At that signal, several sailors appeared, part of the crew of a ship that lay moored in the river. Miyuki was conducted to the vessel. Then the anchor was weighed, the oars were plied, and the ship drove out to open sea.

Just at this time, Sekisuké, Yuminosuké's servant, appeared on the bank, and called loudly to the crew; but they made as if they could not hear him and bent to their oars with might and main. But Miyuki put her head out of the cabin window, and peering through the moonlight, cried: "Oh! That is Sekisuké, is it not?" Then the sailors forced her in and slammed the window to.

Now this old woman, whose name was Aratayé,

had formerly been chief maid-of-honour to Ōtomo Munéshigé, the lord of the province of Buzen. Some years before, Ōtomo had hoisted the standard of revolt against the Shogun. This rebellion quickly ended in his defeat and death at the hands of Ōuchi Yoshitaka, then Governor-General of Chinzei. This Yoshitaka was the father of Asojirō's lord, Yoshi-oki.

Aratayé, a heroine in her way, resolved to fan anew the flame of rebellion and to sap the power of the Ōuchi house, the enemies of her dead lord. With this intent she had called a muster of the surviving adherents of Ōtomo, and had established her headquarters in a cave on Mayasan, a high and steep mountain, that extends across the provinces of Settsu and Harima. To raise the sinews of war she and her followers stopped at nothing in the way of violence and cruelty. Sometimes it was a traveller done to death for the sake of his money and garments; sometimes it was a young girl kidnapped and sold to procurers. It was to their terrible mountain fastness that Miyuki was now conducted.

After an imprisonment of several days in the cave, she was disposed of to a procurer named

Wanuké at the price of a hundred *ryō*. This trader had in mind to clear a large profit by selling the girl for a harlot. But a maiden who had held her life cheap as the price of her chastity, could not be expected to take kindly to such shameful courses. Blows, threats, persuasions, were alike powerless to bend her to the trader's will. To him she proved indeed "a useless treasure." Finally he gave her up and led her back to Aratayé's cave, demanding the restoration of the purchase-money. The old woman, at this, flew into a rage and caught the girl by the arm. "You thankless hussy!" she roared. "So you presume to object to being a woman of pleasure! It is clear that a very severe lesson is needed to bring you to your senses!" With that she snatched the red-hot tongs from the hearth and pointed them at Miyuki's face. "Come, will you drive me to sear that pretty face of yours with these tongs, or brand your cheeks with them?"

"Oh, madame, forgive me!" cried Miyuki, starting back and wailing bitterly.

"Well, if you are so much afraid of the tongs will your fear drive you to consent to go to Nagasaki as a harlot?"

"O, no, no!" Miyuki sobbed. "I am told that Chinese vessels visit Nagasaki. Nothing can humiliate a woman so much as to have her person polluted by the embrace of Chinese sailors! Pray spare me that, whatever may befall me. Send me to service as a common drudge. Gladly will I cook rice, wash clothes, draw water, or perform like menial service."

"No more words!" said the old woman, with a sardonic smile. "It's little money I'd get by selling you for such housemaid's tasks. What a pig-headed creature you are! Do you still persist in disobeying me?" And thereupon she seized the weeping girl by the hair and dragged her about.

Upon this Chisato ("Thousand Villages"), the old crone's daughter, rushed in. She was a sympathetic, sweet-dispositioned girl, and she set Miyuki free from her raging mother, with many an apology for the outrage. But still the old woman would listen to no remonstrance. She thrust her daughter aside and with the tongs showered blow after blow upon Miyuki. The delicate girl uttered but one groan and lost consciousness. Chisato flew to her side and did all

in her power to rouse her from her swoon; but she was long in coming to herself.

Just at this juncture one of Aratayé's followers appeared. He had run all the way from the foot of the mountain to tell her that his comrades had intercepted a traveller in the valley. They had picked a quarrel with him to furnish them with a pretext for robbing him of his money, but he had so far proved too much for them. So they wanted the old woman to come to their help without delay. His message delivered, the emissary hurried back to the valley.

"What helpless weaklings!" exclaimed the impatient old woman. "But I suppose I must go to their help." She seized a sword, kilted up her skirts, and departed at a run. When she was gone, Chisato, with the aid of a kind-hearted young man, devoted herself most tenderly to caring for Miyuki. She treated her with water and drugs, until at long last the girl regained consciousness. Chisato was anxious lest, if the old woman should find her there on her return, she might resume her ill treatment; so she made up her mind to let Miyuki escape as soon as possible. With all kindness she informed her of the road and urged her to take

to flight without loss of time. Miyuki, whose gratitude to the girl was little short of worship, gladly availed herself of this chance of escape, feeling as if she had been freed from the jaws of a poisonous serpent.

V

MIYUKI, though she had got clean away, was now much at a loss whither to turn her steps, but at last she determined to betake herself to the Tōkaidō.

The Tōkaidō was the route followed by the feudal lords of the western provinces on their way to make their visits of homage to the *Kanryō* or Vice-Shogun at Kamakura. This potentate had at that period more power than the Shogun himself, and the *samurai* of the western clans, in the train of their liege-lords, went and came along the same highway, year in and year out. It is probable that Miyuki chose this route in the supposition that, sooner or later, she would encounter her lover Asojirō, who, as she believed, had gone to Kamakura to expostulate with his lord.

Day after day she trudged along forlorn and footsore. It was only after hardships manifold that she made her way to Hamamatsu in the province of Tōtōmi. But there she was stricken with blindness, the result of her incessant weeping



A mob of urchins pelted her with stones

over her sufferings and of her longing for Asojirō. She had now spent the last penny of the money that Chisato had given her to speed her flight. Nothing remained for her but the wretched resource of begging for alms from door to door with staff in hand and to the music of a *samisen*, well-nigh worn-out, singing the "Morning-glory Song."

One afternoon, in her usual routine, she walked about asking alms, with *samisen* on shoulder, in the neighbourhood of Hamamatsu. A mob of urchins collected about her and with the cry of, "Hey, Morning-glory Beggar! Blind Stroller!" pelted her with stones and struck at her with bamboo staves. Only a world of entreaties reinforced with tears, induced the little fiends to give up their cruel sport.

As Miyuki sat by her hut, brooding over the bitterness of her fate, she heard in the distance the mournful sound of a Buddhist chant. Nearer and nearer it came, and presently a woman of middle-age, garbed in the dress of a Buddhist pilgrim, approached Miyuki.

"I have a question," said she, "that I should like to ask of you."

"What is your question?" asked the blind girl, as she wiped away her tears.

"Well," said the woman, "I wish to ask if you have not heard of a beautiful young girl of noble bearing roaming about in this neighbourhood companionless."

This question startled Miyuki as she fancied that it might very well refer to herself, but she answered with assumed composure:

"Well, people not a few come and go along this road, you see; and among all these there may be found many girls travelling alone. But tell me the name of this particular girl, and what province she hails from."

"Her name is Akizuki Miyuki, and she is of the Kishido Clan in Aki Province."

Great was the amazement of the blind girl, when she realized from these words that the questioner was none other than her nurse, Asaka, who had come in search of Miyuki herself. Up to this point, owing to her blindness, she had failed to recognize Asaka, though speaking with her face to face; nor, on the other hand, did Asaka recognize her, owing to the great change in her appearance. Her blindness, especially, had trans-

formed her, though Asaka, it is true, noticed in her features some points of resemblance to Miyuki.

Miyuki was now convinced that the stranger was indeed her nurse, but shame of her wretched condition forbade her to confess the truth. She felt besides, that if she told her name Asaka would insist on her returning home. But how, in such a condition, could she dare to face her parents? The mere thought of such an ordeal made her determine to tell Asaka a falsehood and lead her to abandon her search.

"I am sorry," she said in a husky voice, "but I heard a rumour that the girl you refer to threw herself into a river some days ago and was drowned, though the motive of her act is not known."

The pilgrim, at this sad news, was stupefied with astonishment and broke into bitter wailings. Miyuki attempted to console her with soothing speeches, reminding her that life and death are predetermined by Fate. She ended by kindly advising her to return home, then left her, and groped her way into her wretched shed.

Asaka followed her to the door of the hovel. "Many thanks, my girl," she said, "for your kind advice. I hope that you will take good care of

yourself. Good-bye." With that she was taking her departure when an idea seemed to strike her; she softly retraced her steps and sat down before the shed, still and silent. All unaware of this Miyuki rushed out and stood with sightless eyes straining in the direction in which she supposed her nurse had gone.

"Oh, Asaka! My own Asaka!" she wailed. "All was false that I told you just now! I am that very Miyuki for whom you are searching. How I should rejoice to be able to tell you this! but in this wretched state how can I dare to reveal myself? Selfish, yes, I am very selfish not to disclose the truth to you who have come hundreds of miles in search of me! But I have not courage enough to tell you my name. Forgive me, Asaka! Oh, forgive me!"

Then the tears, which all that time she had restrained, burst forth in bitter torrents, so that Asaka, upon whom none of this soliloquy had been lost, could no longer control her emotion. In spite of herself, a loud cry of sympathy escaped her.

All aghast at this, Miyuki was in act to run away; but Asaka followed her fleeing footsteps

and laid hold upon her sleeve. "There is no need to run away, Miyuki, my dear child," she said, in a voice all broken with emotion. "But oh, what a miserable plight you are in! Well I can imagine how great your sufferings have been. At sight of you I feel as if my heart would burst with sorrow. But, my dear, be easy in your mind. Only a little way from here is the place called Sayono-Nakayama, where I have been told my father Furubé Saburobei is still living. We will go there and see him, and I feel confident that with his assistance I shall be able to find where Asojirō is, and to bring about your meeting with him. So be of good heart, my dear."

Just at this juncture, Wanuké, the procurer, chanced to pass that way. He looked hard into Miyuki's face. "Ho! Ho!" said he. "This is the girl that I bought for a hundred *ryō* from the old crone on Mt. Maya. It's a great pity, indeed, that you have become blind. But that is an evil that physicians, I hope, can remedy. At all events, with me you must go." But as he caught Miyuki by the hand, Asaka broke in upon him. "Women though we are," she cried, "insolence such as yours cannot be overlooked," and she

laid her hand upon the hilt of her sword-cane. Wanuké, too, unsheathed his sword, and for some time the pair cut and thrust at each other. Then the procurer stumbled over a stone and fell headforemost to the ground and, following up this advantage, Asaka dealt him a heavy blow that killed him on the spot. But she also fell senseless to the ground with a groan of mortal agony.

Groping blindly about Miyuki made her way to her nurse, lifted her to her knees, and cried with all the power of her voice. "Asaka! Oh, Asaka!" At this the woman's wandering senses came back to her, and she opened her eyes. "You are very kind, my dear," she said, "but my wound is but a slight one. Don't be anxious on my account. But if the worst comes to the worst, don't fail to go and see my father, Furubé Saburobei. I am sure that he will do for you all that lies in his power. Be sure to call on him, my dear. And now let us go to my inn, and there spend all the night in talk." With that, Asaka rose to her feet and leaning on her sword, staggered away through the moonlight, with Miyuki by her side.

VI

AND now let us return to Komazawa Jirōzayémon. At his uncle's order, he hurried to Kamakura where he found to his consternation that the profligacy of his lord, Ōuchi Yoshi-oki, was even worse than it had been represented. Yoshi-oki, under the spell of a beautiful courtesan called Segawa, was abandoning himself day and night to vicious courses. This mode of life, if nothing occurred to check it, was certain to result in the ruin of his house and the forfeiture of his fief. Jirōzayémon had to tax all his brains before he hit upon a plan for intervention. By clever dealing with the harlot, who was, at heart, of an honest and unselfish nature, he won her over at last to his support. One day, in the midst of Yoshi-oki's merry-making, Jirōzayémon and the girl, making common cause, expostulated with him strongly, though in this the vassal risked his very life. But their words opened the eyes of the young nobleman to his folly, and he determined from that hour to turn over a new leaf.

The joy of Jirōzayémon at this decision knew no bounds. He advised his lord forthwith to return to his clan, and to this suggestion he gave a prompt assent. The Yamaguchi Clan was filled with delight at the news and the services of Jirōzayémon were spoken of in terms of highest praise.

Soon after Yoshioki's departure on his return to his clan, Jirōzayémon also started for his home, having as travelling companion a colleague named Iwashiro Takita. This Takita was a black-hearted villain, and he it was who had insinuated Yoshioki into dissolute ways and well-nigh wrought his ruin. In secret communication with the old virago of Mt. Maya, and her followers, he had been traitorously plotting the downfall of the Ōuchi house. It was but natural, then, that he should conceive a strong animosity against Jirōzayémon, who had, all unwittingly, thwarted his fell designs.

The two *samurai*, in the course of their journey, arrived at the post-town of Shimada, on the Tōkaidō, and put up at an inn called Ebisuya. During their sojourn in this inn it was Takita's purpose to kill Jirōzayémon, and for the accomplishment of this foul deed he had hired two con-

federates. One of these, a physician, was engaged to furnish poison and serve it in the tea. With this intent he secretly put the compound in a kettle of boiling water from which the tea was to be made. The other bravo, a fencer, was to steal in at midnight under the floor,^{*} and from this lurking-place to stab Jirōzayémon in case the poison failed to prove effective. Hapless Jirōzayémon! Death indeed stared him in the face!

But the landlord, a worthy old fellow named Tokuyémon, had from the first seen through Takita's dark plot, and made up his mind to save Jirōzayémon's life. By a happy chance he saw the poisoner pour the noxious draught into the kettle. When the villain left the room, he emptied the kettle, filled it with fresh water and put, instead of poison, a "laughing-medicine" into the water.

Jirōzayémon, when he entered the guest-room, sat down face to face with Takita, and the latter ordered his quacksalver to serve his travelling-companion with tea. But the landlord, who kept

^{*} The thin wooden floor of a Japanese house is usually about three feet above the ground.

them company in the room, winked at Jirōzayémon in a significant manner, and the cautious *samurai*, taking the hint, refrained from touching the tea. The poisoner lost patience. To set at rest any fear of danger, that Jirōzayémon might entertain, he said, "Let me test the tea, gentlemen," and swallowed a cupful at a draught without any show of fear. An antidote, that he carried ready in his bosom, was his reason for acting in this confident manner. But in no long time the "laughing-medicine" began to take effect and he began to laugh, "Ha! Ha!" until every word, every syllable he tried to utter, turned into a peal of laughter. Try as he might, he could not check the spasms of laughing that shook him. So violent they became that his inward parts were troubled and he was forced to excuse himself and leave the room. Takita, sorely disappointed at the failure of his poisoning scheme, also went out on the pretext of going to the bath.

Jirōzayémon likewise left the guest-room, and withdrew to his own apartment which an *andon* was filling with a dim light. As he sat there alone, lost in reverie, his eye chanced to follow the outline of the characters traced on the *tsuitatē* or

screen. What was his surprise to read in them the "Morning-glory Song" which, in the previous year, he had composed for Miyuki on the Uji River! Who and what, he asked himself in wonder, had caused this song to be written on a screen in a public inn? Then all at once came back into his mind the blissful hours he had spent on the Uji River, his regretful parting with Miyuki, and that moonlight night in the harbour of Akashi. A thousand thoughts of his sweetheart rushed upon his mind.

At this moment the landlord stole into the room and told to Jirōzayémon in whispers, the story of the poison and the laughing-medicine. In all good-will he advised him to stand ever on his guard in future. After thanking the old man heartily, Jirōzayémon asked him to clear up the mystery of the presence of the "Morning-glory Song" on the screen.

"That, sir," Tokuyémon answered, "is a song that is sung by a beautiful blind girl. The story that they tell about her is very touching. It is said that she is a daughter of a good *samurai* family, probably of Aki Province. For some reason that nobody can explain she ran away from

home, and since that time has roamed about from one place to another. At last she lost her sight through much weeping and now she begs from door to door, singing this song to the strains of a *samisen* or *koto*. Some time ago a relative of hers, a woman, came in search of her and even managed to find her, but the woman died soon after. So the girl now wanders alone about this neighbourhood and in spite of her blindness she is a very sweet singer so that everybody feels for her and lends her patronage. Among us this song of hers is very well known and we generally call her 'Asagao' ('Morning-glory'). An unhappy fate for a young girl, is it not, sir?" concluded the landlord, his eyes running over with tears.

"Unhappy, indeed," said Jirōzayémon, his heart beating fast with the thought that this forlorn girl might be Miyuki. "To-night I feel strangely lonesome. I should like to listen to the blind girl's singing. Please be so kind as to send for her."

"Your wish is law, sir," replied mine host with prompt assent.

VII

TOKUYÉMON, in leaving Jirōzayémon's apartment met Takita on his way in. The two *samurai* had talked for some time together when the chamber-maid appeared and said: "Asagao has just come, sir."

"Asagao!" exclaimed Takita, with a look of wonder. "Who is this Asagao, my friend?"

"The name, I am told," answered Jirōzayémon "is that of a blind girl who goes about begging in this neighbourhood, and playing on the *koto* or the *samisen*. As I feel lonely to-night I have sent for her. I wish to listen to her music——"

"A blind woman—and a beggar!" broke in Takita, with a forbidding expression. "But, my dear sir, you cannot admit a stroller of that sort into your room. You had better make her perform in the garden, and send her about her business as soon as she has played a tune."

Jirōzayémon in his gentle manner ordered the maid to bring Asagao immediately before the verandah.

As we have seen, Miyuki had, some time before, met her nurse, Asaka, but her joy at this meeting was but a fleeting happiness, for Asaka's wound proved mortal, and soon carried her off. Thus Miyuki again became a solitary wanderer.

In prompt obedience to Jirōzayémon's order, the blind girl came, an old *koto* on her shoulder, feeling her way into the garden with her cane.

"Is it the gentleman of this room that has called me," she asked with a respectful bow. "May I have the honour of playing for you a tune on the *koto*?"

Jirōzayémon, at a single glance, recognized his sweetheart, greatly changed though she was. What a pitiful transformation! At sight of it he wept inwardly. But Takita, quite unaware of this, roared out:

"What a disgusting spectacle! I say, you beggar, you can't wait upon us in such a plight. Take yourself off!"

"Don't speak so cruelly, Takita," said Jirōzayémon, his heart big with grief and compassion. "She is here because I have sent for her—it ill beseems a *samurai* to chide a woman. Come, girl,



Mr. Gadō as *Asagao*

sing us your favourite song—the 'Morning-glory Song' if I remember aright."

Poor blind Miyuki! Quite ignorant of the presence of her lover, she loosed her instrument from her shoulder and played, singing the while in plaintive tones:

"The morning-gloories are fresh and sheen
With sparkling drops of morning dew,
But well-a-day! the sunshine keen
Bids fair to blight their charming hue.
Oh, how I wish a kindly shower
Would fall, to save the lovely flower."

"Well done! Well done, Asagao!" cried Jirō-zayémon with enthusiasm. "Your song has moved me to tears."

"Well done, indeed!" echoed Takita, in a mild tone, that contrasted strangely with his former harshness. "You were not born a beggar, girl. Your touch on the *koto*, your personal beauty, and the grace of your manner are sufficient proof of that. I think a sketch of your personal history would be an interesting tale for us. Please tell it to us minutely."

"Your question, sir, shows me the kindness of

your heart," responded Miyuki and she went on to tell, with all frankness and modesty, her story from beginning to end—how she had run away from home to save her chastity, how she had suffered and wandered, and how her constant weeping had led to blindness.

Every word she spoke struck upon Jirōzayémon's heart, awakening a sense of pity and gratitude. How great was his longing to tell her his name and take her to his heart! But in presence of his colleague such action was impossible.

"You have indeed shown yourself the most loyal of women, Asagao!" he exclaimed. "Surely your lover would rejoice, if he could but hear your story."

The night was wearing on. Miyuki, therefore, bade farewell to the *samurai* and rose in act to go, but she departed with great reluctance, with Jirōzayémon's kindly words still lingering in her ears. Takita also withdrew to his bedroom.

Jirōzayémon then hastily called the maid and bade her request the landlord to come at once and see him. While she was gone upon her errand he sought out a fan on which he wrote some inscription. He was proceeding to wrap up in

paper a sum of money and some medicine when lo and behold! before his eyes flashed the point of a naked sword that had pierced the mat from beneath the floor. With great presence of mind he upset upon the blade the lukewarm water from the kettle. In all likelihood the would-be assassin mistook this water for blood and concluded that his thrust had gone home. At any rate, a masked man, drawn sword in hand, broke into the room and slashed at Jirōzayémon. Without losing his presence of mind the *samurai* engaged him with his fan, and in the midst of the fight Tokuyémon appeared in the room and beheld the struggle with open-mouthed astonishment.

The fight was of short duration. Jirōzayémon disarmed his opponent and scarcely had the young man taken up the fallen sword, when the ruffian's head fell to the mat.

"You are, indeed, a skilful swordsman, sir," the landlord broke out, with an involuntary cry of admiration. But Jirōzayémon coolly ordered him to dispose of the corpse and after the room had been cleaned, said to the old man:

"I have a favour to ask of you. It is that you be so kind as to send again for that blind girl."

"Most certainly, sir," answered the landlord, his head on one side, "but as Asagao has gone to the town of Shimizu she cannot be here to-night."
"How unfortunate! And I must be on the road to-morrow morning not later than four o'clock. What an unlucky creature I am! Well, landlord, I must leave in your care these three things for Asagao, as her fee for our entertainment. Please give them to her when she next comes here."

Tokuyémon received and carefully scrutinized the articles. "This, sir, is a very large sum of money. And a beautiful fan and a packet of medicine into the bargain!"

"The medicine," said Jirōzayémon, "is for the eyes. It is a sovereign remedy, imported from China. Let this preparation be administered, mixed with the blood of a man born in the year of the Rat and any eye-disease will be cured on the instant. It is indeed miraculous in its power."

"It is in truth a precious gift, sir," said Tokuyémon, with a respectful reverence. "How grateful Asagao will be to you! In her name I thank you most heartily, sir."

At that moment the clock struck four, and Takita, arrayed in travelling gear and waited on

by his retinue, came in and urged Jirōzayémon to take the road. He accordingly changed clothes without loss of time and with a friendly farewell to Tokuyémon, set out upon his journey. But he left his heart and soul behind him at the inn. He thought of his sweetheart and thought of her only. Would he ever again, he wondered, have a chance to meet her? Bitter tears of grief and regret welled up, as it seemed, from his very breast.

Tokuyémon, looking after them as their figures lessened in the distance, said to himself: "Both those men are *samurai*, yet how different they are in nature! One a very rascal, and the other all kindness and compassion! What a fine character that Jirōzayémon is! But I think that, for all his kindness, these gifts for Asagao are too great a price for her trifling services to-night. I fancy there is more in this than meets the eye."

Scarcely half an hour had passed, when Miyuki again appeared at the inn. Immediately on her return from Shimizu, she had turned her steps thither, as some instinct had warned her to do.

"Oh, is that you, Asagao?" cried the old landlord. "But you come too late. That kind *samurai* who last night called for you, bade me

send for you again. But I heard that you had gone to Shimizu, and told him it was useless. Then he left in my care a large sum of money for you, a beautiful fan, and some medicine for the eye, of great efficacy. It is now a good while since he set out on his journey. But here are all his gifts, Asagao."

"It was very kind indeed, of the gentleman," said the girl, with an air of wonder. "I am only sorry that I could not thank him in person. But please look at the fan and tell me if anything is written on it."

"Well," said Tokuyémon, as he opened the fan, "there is a morning-glory painted on a golden ground and, strangely enough, your song of the 'Morning-glory' is written above the flower. On the other side is the signature, 'Miyagi Asojirō, now named Komazawa Jirōzayémon.' "

"Oh! was that Asojirō himself?" cried Miyuki, all panic-stricken. "I fancied that the tones of his voice were familiar but I little dreamed that it was Asojirō. How long is it since he left the inn?"

"It was but a little time ago. Is he an acquaintance of *yours*, my girl?"

"An *acquaintance*! More than an acquaintance. He is none other than that husband whom I have sought for such a weary time! But I have no time to throw away. I will try to overtake him."

Without more words, she began to run. "I say!" shouted Tokuyémon, clutching at her sleeve; "it is dangerous for you to run like that."

"No! No! What is it to me if I *do* die?"

"But, blind as you are, you will never overtake him!"

To this Miyuki gave no heed. She shook off Tokuyémon and sped away.

Dawn had not yet come; it was still dark and dreary. The rain which a little time before had begun to fall, had gradually increased and was now coming down in torrents.

VIII

A LITTLE to the west of the town of Shimada flows the largest river on the Tōkaidō—the Ōi River. In days of yore, when engineering was yet in its nonage, no bridge could be built, no practicable ferry-boat devised, on account of the great width of its bed and the swiftness of the current. Therefore travellers were carried across this river on small litters called *rendai*, borne aloft on the shoulders of naked coolies. But whenever the stream was swollen by heavy rains, all communication between the two shores was suddenly cut off.

By the time Miyuki, all spent with running, had reached the Ōi River, the torrential rainfall had had its effect and the current of the river was running with great fierceness. As, stumbling and staggering, she gained the bank, she called out in a faltering voice to the coolies:

"Can you tell me if a *samurai*, one Komazawa Jirōzayémon, has already crossed the river?"

"He has crossed but now; but as the river has

come down in sudden flood any further traffic across the stream is impossible." With that the coolies went their several ways.

At these cruel words, the baffled girl fell to the ground, but in a moment she was on her feet again, and turning to the heavens her sightless eyes, "How merciless ye are, ye gods," she cried, with writhing body, and stamping foot. "Amid all my woes, amid all the hardships of these long dreary months, not for a single moment did I forget to call on you, that ye might vouchsafe to me, yet one more meeting with my beloved; yet now, so cruel ye are, at this moment of all moments, ye have cut off from me my passage across this stream!" Then her defiance collapsed and she murmured with an air of resignation: "Ah, all is plain to me now. This sudden swelling of the river reveals to me that I am not destined to become Asojirō's bride. It is the will of the gods, of a surety, that by my own act I should put an end to my life. What reason have I for clinging to life?"

Even as she spoke, she gathered a number of small stones and placed them in her flowing sleeves. Thus prepared, she was on the point of

plunging into the roaring river, when a loud voice cried:

"Hold, Miyuki, hold!" and she felt a hand grasp her sleeve.

The newcomer was none other than Sekisuké, her father's faithful servant, who, in company with Tokuyémon, had come in pursuit of Miyuki. The girl made a desperate struggle to free her sleeve, crying: "Oh, that is Sekisuké, is it not? But I have come here too late! After manifold hardships and wanderings, I managed last night to come face to face with Asojirō, but woe is me! I am blind and did not recognize him. When I knew it was he I ran after him, but, unhappy wretch that I am, all traffic across the river is now cut off. Oh, Sekisuké! what shall I do?"

"I can well imagine how grieved and disappointed you must feel," answered the servant, "and with all my heart I sympathize with you. But never give way to despair, for I assure you that I will manage by some means or other to bring about your meeting with Asojirō and that very soon. But now let me tell my own story. After searching for you with all diligence, month after month, I felt almost inclined to give up the

quest in despair. Then, strange to say, two nights ago I saw your nurse, Asaka, in a dream, and from her I learned that you were then at the Ebisuya, an inn at Shimada. I gathered but this, for something broke my dream. But travelling day and night I made all haste to the inn, and have had the good fortune to come in time to save your life. This is a joyful moment for me! But in regard to Asaka, I believe that she donned the habit of a pilgrim and set out along the Tōkaidō in search of you. Have you not come across her anywhere?"

"Yes," answered Miyuki, tearfully. "I fell in with Asaka last month at Hamamatsu, but that very night it unluckily happened that she was forced to fight a ruffian, and in that fight received her death-wound. When at the point of death she told me that her father, one Furubé Saburobei, was living at Sayono-Nakayama and adjured me to call on him for help."

Tokuyémon, when he heard these words, showed signs of great surprise.

"Is it possible," said he, "that you are the daughter of Akizuki Yuminosuké? And your nurse? Could she have been Asaka, my own daughter? I am that very Furubé Saburobei

whom you desire to meet. In my youth I was your grandfather's retainer and by him I was treated with great favour. But, if the truth must be told, I formed a *liaison* with one of his maids-of honour and both of us were to be put to death by our lord's own hand. Yuminosuké, however, interceded for us in the kindness of his heart and we were dismissed from the household without further punishment. During our long wanderings my wife gave birth to a girl. When the child was only two years old the mother was carried off by illness, and as I could not bring up the child single-handed, I gave her to my aunt to care for. I am happy to learn that she grew to be a woman and entered into the service of Yuminosuké, my benefactor, and that even after death her loyalty endured so that in a dream she showed Sekisuké where he might find you. What an admirable woman she was! But I, too, Miyuki, have something which I can present to you!"

Even as he spoke, he drew his dagger and plunged it into his side.

"Why do you thus devote yourself to death?" cried Sekisuké in amazement.

Tokuyémon's answer came, broken by groans

of agony: "I was told by Jirōzayémon that the remedy he gave to Miyuki was of miraculous potency, and was brought from China. He said, too, that if it were administered mixed with the blood of a man born in the year of the Rat, it would cure, on the instant, any affection of the eyes. By great good fortune I was born in the year of the Rat, and I have resolved to give my life in return for Yuminosuké's kindness. So take my blood, Sekisuké, and, blended with the wondrous cure, administer it to Miyuki."

Sekisuké, his eyes streaming with tears of admiration and sympathy, drew forth a cup and caught in it some of the blood that gushed from the wound of the dying man. Then from the weeping girl's bosom he took the packet of medicine, dropped it into the blood, and presented the mixture to Miyuki. "Words are too weak to utter thanks for such a deed as yours, Tokuyémon," she said, and drank it at a draught. Wonder of wonders—the darkness was gone from her eyes, and at that moment she could "see even the creeping of an ant."

Miyuki's joy knew no bounds; Sekisuké in his delight was moved to dance, and Tokuyémon was

well content. "Now there is nothing left in life that I can desire," said he. "Farewell, Miyuki! Sekisuké, farewell!" and with that he drew the dagger through his body to the other side, then slashed his throat across, and so breathed his last.

IX

KOMAZAWA JIRŌZAYÉMON, after his return to his clan, set himself, heart and soul, to the task of assisting Ōuchi Yoshioki in the carrying out of reforms in administration, and grew in ever greater favour with his lord. On a certain day it happened that the household of Jirōzayémon were in a bustle of preparation, wishing to give a fitting welcome to his lord, who had announced his intention of honouring him with a visit at his private residence. As the sweeping and dusting went on busily the maids incessantly laughed and chattered, their tongues no less busy than their hands. "Surely in all this great world there is none who is like to our master either in looks or in brains. She certainly is a lucky woman who is destined to become his wife—such a fine gentleman as he is! She will be the happiest woman in all Japan!"

At the hour appointed, Lord Ōuchi, with Iwashiro Takita in attendance, duly arrived. Jirōzayémon, with all reverence, welcomed him at

the portal, and ushered him into the guest-room with words of greeting: "It gives me great delight to see you well and in good spirits, my lord. I am very grateful that you deign to honour my humble dwelling with your august presence. No greater honour could fall to the lot of our family, my lord."

Yoshioki had hardly seated himself when he broke into speech, while the expression of his face betrayed the gravity of his mood: "There is a rumour that the remnants of the Ōtomo faction are prowling about in the bordering provinces trying to stir up rebellion. If we leave them unmolested a very serious state of affairs will develop. What do you advise? Shall we strike now and try to wipe them out once and for all?"

"That, my lord," said Takita, "is out of the question. The Ōtomo partisans are not, by any means, to be made light of and if, at the rallying-cry of war, all the adherents of that house make head against our clan from several provinces our peril will be very grave indeed. They will muster so strong that to face their great forces with our small army would be more futile than to attempt to smash a huge rock with a hen's egg. In my

opinion the safest course for you is to go again to Kamakura and by leading a life of pleasure there to distract their attention from us, and so avert the danger."

Jirōzayémon was not slow to perceive the treacherous motive that underlay Takita's suggestion, but he dissembled his thoughts with a show of utter ignorance.

"Takita is right in what he says, but I have an opinion of my own," he said calmly; "but the discussion of this matter will bear waiting till another occasion. For to-day, I would ask you, my lord, to make yourself at home in the inner apartment." To this proposal Yoshioki nodded his assent and quietly walked into the inner room, followed by the two *samurai*.

Just as the sun was setting, and when the dusk was gathering, there came a knock at the porch of Jirōzayémon's house. He went in person to the entry and found a man standing there, who forthwith proceeded to introduce himself: "My name is Sekisuké, and I serve Akizuki Yumino-suké, Chief Councillor of the Kishido Clan of Aki Province. Very important business has brought me to make this call upon you, sir."

The puzzled *samurai* scanned his visitor narrowly and caught sight of a beautiful young woman hiding bashfully behind Sekisuké. What need to tell that this was Miyuki?

"Are you indeed Sekisuké? I have often heard of you," said Jirōzayémon, with a show of familiarity, holding his emotion in check. "For all the trouble you have taken for Miyuki's sake I owe you hearty thanks. I am happy indeed to see you again, Miyuki. When, a few days ago, I chanced to fall in with you at Shimada I had a great desire to make myself known to you. But to my great mortification, I could not do so in the presence of my travelling companion. I beg you to overlook my apparent unkindness. I take it that the restoration of your eyesight is due to the specific that I left with Tokuyémon for you. Nothing could give me greater joy, my dear!"

Miyuki could no longer control her emotion. She burst into tears and through her sobs no words would come. So Sekisuké spoke in her stead and related all that had befallen her. "As she is now quite restored to health," he went on, "I have brought her here without delay, and I am

very glad to find you well. I can well imagine how joyful and happy Miyuki must feel."

"Then it seems to me," said Jirōzayémon, "it is now high time that we should wed with my lord's permission. By a happy chance he is even now here in my house. I will go at once and request his consent."

In no long time the youthful lovers had the happiness of exchanging cups of marriage in the inner apartment, under the auspices of Lord Ōuchi, and a few days later a splendid banquet was given in honour of their nuptials.

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Shortly afterwards the treachery of Iwashiro Takita came to light and he met a traitor's death. Aratayé, the old heroine of Mt. Maya, made away with herself for some unknown reason, and all her followers dispersed in despair.

Hatsugorō's Revenge

From

The Hakoné Reigen Izari Katakuchi

By

Chikamatsu Tokuzō

Katsugorō's Revenge

I



THE Regent Taikō Hideyoshi had a retainer named Iinuma Sampei. He was a valiant warrior, and had distinguished himself in the liege-lord's conquest of the island of Shikoku. At the time when this story opens, he was serving as assistant superintendent in the construction of Hideyoshi's castle at Fushimi, in the neighbourhood of Kyōto. His colleague Satō Gōsuké was a licentious, inhuman, and lustful man. Sampei had saved his life in one of the battles in Shikoku. However, the villain was not grateful to his benefactor, but bore him strong ill will on account of the increase of Sampei's stipend, in recognition of his recent achievement. The two *samurai* had entirely opposite natures. Sampei was upright to the core, and Gōsuké was dishonest and cunning. This fact contributed towards the friction existing between them. One day they quarrelled

fiercely before Katagiri Katsumoto, the superintendent of the works. He arbitrated between them, at the same time making a remark in censure of Gōsuké's abusive language.

That same night, when Gōsuké was on his way home, brooding over the quarrel, he happened to meet Sampei's sweetheart O-Katsu, who was returning from a secret meeting with Sampei. As he caught a glimpse of her face in the moonlight, he fell in love with her, and taking her by force to a house near by, made violent protestation of love to her. She pretended to yield, but seeing her chance, she succeeded in effecting her escape. This fact filled Gōsuké with disappointment, and made his jealous feelings towards Sampei more fierce than before. Just then Sampei, who was quite ignorant of his presence, passed near him. Gōsuké followed him stealthily, and attacked him unawares. Sampei was mortally wounded, but he offered him a stout resistance. Unluckily, after a few minutes' fighting, he succumbed to his wound. That same night the murderer took to flight. Strange to say, a few days later, he encountered O-Katsu travelling alone. He again made love to her, but she indig-

nantly rejected him. He was so overcome with spite and wrath, that he killed her on the spot.

Shortly afterwards Gōsuké went to Kamakura, where Hōjō Ujimasa lived. The latter was the *daimyo* of the eight provinces of Kwantō, and was a relative of the rascal Gōsuké. Gōsuké secretly met Ujimasa, and asked for his protection. The latter willingly consented, and gave him employment as his military adviser. To avoid detection, Gōsuké changed his name to Takiguchi Kōzuke. He had not long been in the service of Ujimasa, before he began to exercise a considerable amount of authority in his new capacity, and behaved arrogantly towards his inferiors.

Sampei had a younger brother named Katsugorō, who although he was still merely a stripling, was a warrior as brave as Sampei had been. His father had died when he was but a child, and he had been brought up by Sampei. He therefore had come to regard Sampei with as much affection and piety as he would towards a real father. When he heard of his brother's death, he was overcome with grief. On learning that the murderer was Satō Gōsuké, he was chagrined out of measure, and immediately made up his mind to find the

assassin at any cost, and revenge himself of his brother's death. He entreated for, and obtained from the Regent Hideyoshi, permission for vendetta. Katsugorō was joined in his undertaking by a faithful servant of his dead brother, named Fudesuké.

Fudesuké, although he was merely a servant, thoroughly understood the duty of loyalty to his lord. He possessed wonderful muscular power, and proficiency in military arts. Katsugorō and Fudesuké wished to avoid notice, so they resolved to travel in different directions in search of their enemy. They also arranged to meet each other from time to time for mutual information. Fudesuké set out on his journey the very day following his master's assassination. Katsugorō started soon after. They wandered for more than four years, through different provinces, *incognito* and under assumed names. However, their hardships and sufferings proved to be of no avail. They could not find a single clue as to the enemy's whereabouts.

II

AFTER Katsugorō had been persistently searching for his enemy for five years, he learned by chance that Gōsuké was related to Hōjō Ujimasa. He was rejoiced to hear this information, and hurried away to Kamakura. He then assumed the name of Michisuké, and became servant to Tsukumo Shinzayémon, who was the instructor in fencing of the Hōjō Clan, in order to learn whether his enemy was taking shelter in the clan. Shinzayémon had an only daughter named Hatsuhana, who was a beautiful girl of seventeen. Her great beauty was the talk of Kamakura. Many young *samurai* admired her passionately, and wished to be her lovers. Takiguchi Kōzuke, who had enjoyed some six years' safety, had long since been giving rein to his lecherous nature. He had caught a glimpse of Hatsuhana, had fallen deeply in love with her, and had made up his mind to use his power in securing her hand. Hatsuhana, for her part, had strong feelings of affection towards the new servant Michisuké, who had a fine appearance,

was sagacious to no small degree, and skilled in military arts.

One day Hatsuhana, accompanied by her maids, went to worship at the Temple of Hachiman, the God of War, which was situated on the hill of Tsuruga-oka.

After she had finished praying, she began to descend the stone steps, when Kōzuke and his servant Dansuke rushed forth from behind some great trees, where they had been hiding.

"Hatsuhana, daughter of Shinzayémon," cried Kōzuke proudly. "I have some important business to discuss with you."

Hatsuhana made a profound obeisance. "Sir Takiguchi Kōzuke, I believe," she said. "Can it be that your honour has some business with me?"

"Yes, indeed!" he said. "It gives me great pleasure to meet you here. My business is this—" —he took a letter from his bosom and handed it to her——

" 'To Hatsuhana.

From her passionate admirer,

KŌZUKÉ.'

I hope you will not refuse my ardent desire
fair maiden."



Mr. Gudo as *Kōzuke*

"O sir!" exclaimed she, returning him the letter, "such a jest is unseemly."

"It is no jest. I am in great earnest, Hatsu-hana. I have yearned for you for a long time, and have watched for my chance to lay bare my secret to you. Don't disappoint me. If you consent, you shall at once become my wife."

"Oh, pardon me, sir, but I never dreamed of such a thing."

"Don't say that, my sweet girl," said Kōzuke, catching her by the hand. "Be kind enough to read my letter. All my heart and soul is contained in its pages."

Hatsuhana was filled with indignation, and shaking off his hand, ran away. Kōzuke and his servant tried to catch her, but she and her maids ran to and fro about the temple grounds to keep them off.

At this moment Shinzayémon and his henchman, Michisuké, appeared on the scene. When he saw them, Kōzuke suddenly ceased his pursuit of the girls.

Then Shinzayémon purposely cried out to the girls in angry tones: "Go home quickly, girls.

You are very wrong to loiter about here, after your worship is finished. How foolish you are!"

When the girls had departed, he saluted Kōzuke politely, and said:

"I received a letter from you yesterday, Kōzuke, saying that you wished to see me on some business. This is a good opportunity for you to tell me what it is."

"Well, Shinzayémon, I have a favour to ask of you," said Kōzuke composedly, as if he had quite forgotten the shameless way in which he had accosted the girls. "You are a noted fencer, so you must be well versed in the secret principles of all the schools of fencing. I want you to give me instruction in the secrets of the art."

"Is that what you wanted to ask me?" answered Shinzayémon, feigning calmness. "Of course it would be discourteous of me to refuse the request of Kōzuke, honourable adviser to his Excellency Lord Hōjō. But it is a strict rule of my house never to teach the secrets of fencing to anybody who is not already proficient in the art. You must pardon me for saying so, but before I can give you my definite answer, I must witness your ability."

"Pooh!" said Kōzuke, smiling sarcastically. "You wish to witness my ability? Let me tell you that I was formerly a retainer of his Highness the Regent Taikō. I distinguished myself in several battles under his command. Moreover everyone knows that I am a hero. You need have no fears about my ability, Shinzayémon. What say you, Dansuké?"

"Of course!" broke in Dansuké, "your ability is beyond question. If five or ten men were to attack you at one time, you could kill them even with a wooden sword, not to mention a real one. If you doubt my words, Shinzayémon, let my lord have a fencing bout with ten or twelve *samurai* at once; nay, fifty or a hundred *samurai*, if you choose."

Michisuké had long since been thinking that Kōzuke might possibly be the enemy for whom he was seeking. He, therefore, considered that the best opportunity had come to ascertain the truth of his conjecture, and if he were Gōsuké, to test his ability.

"Excuse the presumption of my request, my lord," said he to Shinzayémon, in a most reverential manner. "I should be grateful if you would order me to contest with Sir Kōzuke."

Kōzuke did not wait for Shinzayémon's answer, but flushing with anger, he burst out: "That is too presumptuous. You are merely a low-born servant!"

"Yes, such a fight is quite impossible," broke in Kōzuke's servant. "But you may have a trial with this Dansuke. Be on guard, fellow!"

Kōzuke and Shinzayémon both gave their tacit permission, and the two servants prepared for a fencing bout, armed with wooden swords. In a moment Dansuke was disarmed, and frightened at Michisuke's skill and physical power, took to his heels.

Kōzuke gnashed his teeth with mortification. He then played a dastardly trick, and drawing his sword, he cut at Michisuke with all his strength. The latter was not at all daunted, but encountered him with his wooden sword with such skill, that Kōzuke was quite unable to use his blade. He was filled with wonder and fear at the dexterity with which his antagonist wielded his weapon.

"It is very strange," he exclaimed, looking very intently at Michisuke's face. "Surely you are using the method of the Iinuma school. Who can you be, that you have learned that manner of fighting?"

As he spoke these words, the truth seemed to flash across Michisukō's mind. Both combatants paused, with their swords in their hands, and stared at each other, standing motionless as statues.

Shinzayémon suddenly stepped up, and parted them. He then scolded his servant with a significant look.

"You are too bold to fight with Sir Kōzuke. You have not sufficient ability. You must pardon his presumption, Sir Kōzuke."

"Well, Shinzayémon," said Kōzuke. "Your servant has remarkable skill. It is hard for me to believe that he is merely a servant."

"You are mistaken, sir. He appears at first sight to be very skilful. But really he is only an amateur, and an ordinary servant. His skill cannot be compared with yours. Your art is wonderful in the extreme!"

"If you really admire my methods, you will readily consent to my request about teaching me the secrets of fencing, won't you, Shinzayémon?"

"I will give your honour an answer shortly."

Then they bade each other farewell, and went their respective ways.

III

As time went on, Hatsuhana's passion for Michisuké became so strong that she felt that she could no longer brood over it in silence. At last she unbosomed herself to him, and begged him to satisfy her ardent longing. Michisuké fully sympathized with her, but was unable to express his feelings; for he had a great task to fulfill, and besides he could not forget his duty to his master so far as to enter into secret engagement with his daughter. He therefore gave the girl a polite but firm refusal. However, when love receives a sudden check, it is its nature to become stronger. Hatsuhana's passion became deeper and deeper, and at last she made up her mind to beg her parents to arrange a marriage between herself and Michisuké.

In the meantime Kōzuké had dwelt upon his recent courtship to Hatsuhana, and longed for her day and night. At last he confided his secret to two friends, and the three of them together called on Shinzayémon to make forcible negotiations.

"Shinzayémon," said one of them, "a certain nobleman has determined to make your daughter his wife, no matter what happens."

"A nobleman wants my daughter?" asked Shinzayémon feigning surprise. "Who can it be, sir?"

"It is none other than myself, Kōzuke," said the arrogant and blustering villain. "I am honourable adviser to Lord Hōjō, and was formerly a retainer of His Highness the Regent Taikō."

He paused, and then added dictatorially:

"When you and I are relations in law, I need hardly remind you that you must instruct me in the secrets of fencing, according to my request of the other day, Shinzayémon."

Shinzayémon was an honourable *samurai*, and was not the kind of man to submit to such an insolent demand.

"So it is, Kōzuke, is it?" said he disdainfully. "I thank you for your kind proposal, sir, but must respectfully decline it."

"Do you think that I should be an unsatisfactory son-in-law?" exclaimed Kōzuke with excitement. "Let me tell you that I took part in scores of battles, as a retainer of His Highness the Regent Taikō, and was not beaten once."

"It is quite possible that you were a retainer of His Highness the Regent Taikō, but you are now a hanger-on of Lord Hōjō. The word 'adviser' has a pleasant ring about it, but in reality you are a vagabond and a dependent. I could not give my daughter to such as you."

"Insolence! It is a gross insult to Lord Hōjō to call his adviser a vagabond. I must remind you that I have no equal in Japan in tactics and fencing."

"Indeed! In that case why did you assassinate your fellow-*samurai* Inuma Sampei in such a cowardly manner, and why did you murder his betrothed merely out of a trifling grudge and disappointed love? How can you hold up your head so proudly, and have the affront to call yourself a *samurai*?"

Kōzuke was taken aback at this unexpected exposure of his crime, and his face assumed a demoniacal expression. He gave a nod to his friends, and all three suddenly unsheathed their swords, and cut furiously at Shinzayémon. The latter was not at all alarmed. He instantaneously struck off the swords of the ruffian's assistants. He also pinioned Kōzuke by the arm, and turned them all out of the gate.

Chagrined at this, Kōzuke turned and cried: "I shall have my revenge on you for this," and ran off as fast as he could.

When the rascal had departed, Shinzayémon summoned his wife Sawarabi and said quietly:

"It is your fault that such an outrageous suitor has made his appearance. Why have you allowed a marriageable girl to remain unwed? So, you must not lose a moment in making preparations for a marriage ceremony."

"But, my husband, with whom shall our daughter marry?" asked Sawarabi in astonishment.

"With Michisuké!" whispered Shinzayémon into her ear. "He is only a servant, but he is a perfect gentleman in appearance, intelligence, and military arts. He is quite worthy of being our daughter's husband. Make them both acquainted with my intention at once."

His wife had learned of Hatsuana's strong attachment for Michisuké and rejoiced to hear Shinzayémon's words. She readily assented, and immediately set about preparing for the ceremony. At that moment a servant entered, bearing a message. It was from Lord Hōjō, who summoned Shinzayémon to him at the castle upon urgent

business. The idea crossed the keen-witted man's mind that Kōzuke had been slandering him to his lord, but he did not betray his thoughts. He calmly donned his court dress, and once again repeating his command to his wife, he set out for the castle.

Then Sawarabi summoned her daughter, and told her that her marriage ceremonies had been arranged to take place that evening. The girl was filled with astonishment, and anxiously enquired who was the bridegroom.

"My dear girl, it is the man you like best," answered the mother smilingly.

"The man I like best, mother?" asked Hatsu-hana, trembling with apprehension.

"It is none other than Michisuké," said her mother.

At this glad answer the girl heaved a sigh of relief. She could scarcely disguise her joy, and almost fell on her mother's neck in her gratitude.

Then Sawarabi called Michisuké, and said: "I am afraid you will be surprised at receiving such an abrupt request, but both my husband and I earnestly pray that you will marry our daughter.

With your kind consent the marriage ceremony shall be performed this evening."

"You wish me to marry Lady Hatsuhana?" said Michisuké with a surprised look. "It would be the greatest honour possible for me to become your son-in-law. But it cuts me to the heart to say that there is an insuperable barrier to the marriage which cannot be removed. Therefore I cannot accept your kind proposal. Please forgive my disobeying your grateful commands, dear lady."

"Why cannot you marry my daughter?" asked Sawarabi in irritated tones. "Are you dissatisfied with her or with the house? Or is there some other reason?"

"Oh! may I be for ever cursed, if I find anything unsatisfactory either in Lady Hatsuhana or your house!" exclaimed Michisuké. "It is indeed for some other reason that I cannot marry her. It is a great secret which I cannot disclose, even if you demand my life."

At this positive and final refusal, Sawarabi was at her wits' ends to know what to do. She sighed with disappointment, and Hatsuhana, whose heart had been filled with joy, suddenly burst into bitter tears.

At that moment Shinzayémon, who had returned home unawares, was heard crying in an inner room: "Disobedient servant! I will chastise you."

With these words he rushed forth with a spear in his hand, and pushing aside Sawarabi and Hatsuhana, who tried to stop him, leaped down to the courtyard, and levelled his weapon at Michisuké.

The latter did not show any fear, but with great skill avoided the spear-head each time it was thrust at him. While they were thus engaged Shinzayémon's face gradually turned pale, his steps became unsteady, and his spear quivered. Michisuké observed him carefully, and said:

"Excuse me, my lord, but why is your spear so unsteady? It is not worthy of the greatest master of fencing in the Hōjō Clan. Your pale face and your uncertain steps tell me that you have committed *harakiri*."

Shinzayémon was struck with amazement at the other's sharp observation. He reeled and fell on his back, exclaiming: "Your keen-sightedness astonishes me, Sir Inuma Katsugorō!"

So saying, he tore off his upper garments, and exposed his abdomen, which was bound with

several layers of white silk cloth, dyed scarlet with blood. Sawarabi and Hatsuana rushed to him, and asked him in consternation: "Why have you killed yourself?"

Katsugorō stepped up to the dying man, and examining the wound carefully, exclaimed: "Your act of *harakiri* is indeed splendid, Shinzayémon. Your moments are numbered. I must confess the truth, and ask your forgiveness. You have guessed aright. I am Iinuma Katsugorō. For the last six years I have wandered throughout Japan in search of Satō Gōsuké, in order to revenge my brother's death. It was only for this purpose that I entered into your service. My reason for declining your kind proposal of marriage is because my great task is still undone. But I am filled with amazement at your suicide. Pray tell us your reason for it."

Shinzayémon gasped for breath. "Well," he said, "it did not take me long to perceive that the overbearing Takiguchi Kōzuke and Satō Gōsuké were one and the same man. On the occasion of your recent fencing bout with Gōsuké at Tsurugaoaka, I perceived with astonishment from observing your methods of work, that you were none

other than Iinuma Katsugorō. I feared that the coward murderer might suspect your identity, so I pretended to be ignorant of your personality and even laughed your art to scorn. This afternoon the ruffian Gōsuké had the impudence to propose marriage with my daughter. I flatly refused, and he became angry. He determined to work off his spite against me, and immediately reported to my lord that I had sheltered you. So a few minutes ago my lord summoned me, and peremptorily ordered me to kill you during the course of to-night. How could I possibly do so? I owe a great debt of gratitude to your grandfather Motokatsu. He instructed me in all the secrets of fencing when I was young. At that time my name was Matsunami Kazuyō. But if I disobeyed my lord's commands I should be looked upon as a disloyal retainer. Rather than incur his displeasure I have killed myself. My dying wishes are that you should satisfy my daughter's ardent desire, and make her your wife. If you give me your promise I shall die happy. Do not refuse me this, Katsugorō."

Katsugorō was wonder-struck at Shinzayémon's story. He burst into tears of gratitude.

"Words fail me in which to express my thanks," he said. "You have spared my life and sacrificed your own, out of gratitude for my grandfather. I will gladly accept Hatsuhana as my bride. We will now, with your permission, exchange the nuptial cup, and celebrate our marriage before you die."

He ordered the maid-servant to bring cups and *saké*, and exchanged a cup of the wine with Hatsuhana. The girl was overwhelmed with gratitude and grief, with which there was a mingling of joy. She muttered a few words of thanks to her father, and she and her mother burst into bitter tears.

Katsugorō rose to his feet. "Now," he said, "I have discovered my enemy's whereabouts. I will go and take my revenge. Farewell, Sir Shinzayémon."

With these words he prepared to depart.

"Do not be so rash," said Shinzayémon, raising his hand. "Your impatience is natural, but I must remind you that Gōsuké has received warning of his danger, and is carefully guarded by scores of *samurai*. If you try to attack him single-handed, you are sure to suffer the fate of a 'summer

insect plunging into the fire.' I advise you to escape with Hatsu-hana, and await till a good opportunity occurs. Don't do anything rash!"

"I will follow your kind advice," said Katsugorō. "But if I delay, Lord Hōjō will send soldiers against me. I can hardly reconcile myself to leaving you on the eve of your death, but this emergency makes it unavoidable. Forgive my seeming unkindness, and farewell, my dear father and mother."

Under cover of night which by this time had fallen, the young couple stole out of the postern, and fled into the darkness.

IV

AFTER their escape from Kamakura, Katsugorō and Hatsuhana wandered about here and there for many months. One day when they were in the neighbourhood of an out-of-the-way village adjoining the boundary between Shimozuké and Ōshyū, unfortunately Katsugorō was taken ill. Hatsuhana nursed him devotedly by day and by night. Doctors were summoned from neighbouring villages, and they did their utmost, but it was of no avail. Gradually the patient's condition went from bad to worse, until he became so crippled that he could not walk even a step. To make matters worse, all of Katsugorō's little supply of money was used up to pay the expenses of his illness. It soon became impossible for the couple to remain any longer in the inn. They removed to a miserable hovel which was built on the outskirts of the village by some kind peasants. There they were reduced to making a bare existence by begging for coppers from passers-by. It is easy to imagine Katsugorō's feelings in those days.

Ten long years had passed since he had left his home. Thoughts of his brother's enemy were constantly in his mind. Kōzuke it seemed was protected by the powerful *daimyo* Hōjō Ujimasa and was aided by the authorities of the eight provinces under Ujimasa's rule. Therefore, even if Katsugorō had been in sound health, it would be almost impossible for him to avenge himself. His present plight made it still more difficult. When he thought of these things he was filled with regret and despair.

Hatsuhana carefully and tenderly nursed her sick and lame husband, and encouraged him by saying that he would recover in time, and be able to accomplish his long-cherished purpose. The faithful young wife was compelled to lead a beggar's life, and suffered indescribable hardships and insults.

It was early one night, and the bright moon was hanging over the mountains, when the *daikwan* or governor of the seven neighbouring villages, a haughty tyrant named Mizoguchi, happened to pass Hatsuhana's hovel. She ran out, and asked him for alms. The governor paused, and looked intently at her face, upon which the moon was shining.

"Are you a beggar girl?" he asked. "Surely you are too beautiful for such a life! Aha! You must be the much-talked-of cripple's wife. I will, of course, give you as much money as you require, but in return you must yield to my desire——"

So saying, he seized Hatsuhana by the hand, and drew her to him. She controlled her anger and said with feigned calm: "It is not seemly for a lord to joke with a beggar woman!" and she struggled to shake off his hand. But the impudent man only tightened his grasp, and tried to embrace her. Hatsuhana could remain passive no longer. She was well skilled in *jūjutsu* or "the art of self-defence without weapons," which she had learned under her father's instructions. She pinioned his arms, and threw him with a thud to the ground.

"*Yai*, beggar woman!" cried he, springing to his feet. "What insolence, to fling down a warrior like myself!"

"Oh, no, sir! By a mere accident your honour stumbled against a stone."

"It is false!" he cried. "It is a disgrace that I, a *daikwan*, governing seven villages should be

thrown down by a beggar woman. You shall lose your life for this."

"Nay, sir, I am to blame, and I apologize heartily for my rudeness."

"You may apologize as much as you please," roared he with his hand on the hilt of his sword. "I will never forgive the insult you have offered me."

At that moment the village headman, an old man named Tokuyémon, appeared on the scene, accompanied by his servant. He earnestly begged the governor not to be so harsh with Hatsuhana; but Mizoguchi shrugged his shoulders, and said:

"I will never pardon her. You see, the moment she caught sight of me, she fell in love with me, and she wooed me desperately. When I indignantly rejected her, on account of her disgusting appearance, she was offended, and seizing my arm, she roughly threw me down to the ground. I can never forgive her violence! In my position as *daikwan* it is impossible for me to do so."

"That is a lie!" broke in Hatsuhana impatiently. "It is the governor who made shameful proposals to me. I did nothing."

"Silence, girl!" interrupted Tokuyémon. "I

am aware of everything. The best thing for you to do, is to apologize to his honour at once. Sir Mizoguchi, it is a great disgrace to a *samurai* to be thrown down by a beggar woman. I think it is advisable for you to forgive this woman, and take your immediate departure."

"Well," said the governor, softened by Tokuyémon's advice, "as her rudeness was caused by her passion for me, I am almost inclined to pity her. Tokuyémon, I leave this matter to you. Advise this beggar never to repeat such rudeness again. When one possesses such a handsome countenance as I do, it is sometimes apt to prove rather a curse. *Yai*, you virago! You should not fall in love with every attractive man who passes here."

With these words the governor strutted away. The old man approached Hatsuana to console her.

"I at once recognized the true state of affairs," he said, "but it would be useless for you to dispute with a *daiikwan*, so I purposely decided in his favour, and managed to persuade him to leave you. My intentions were entirely for your benefit. Do not misunderstand me."

Hatsuhana's feelings were pacified, and she thanked the old man for his kindness. A few minutes afterwards Katsugorō crawled out of the hovel, and thanked him heartily. Tokuyémon was a kind-hearted man, and had always entirely sympathized with Katsugorō and his wife, and aided them to the best of his ability.

Just then another servant arrived, drawing a kind of wagon after him. The old man pointed to this and said: "I had this wagon hastily constructed to-day, in order to offer it to both of you. The truth is this. This morning I received from Lord Hōjō who is at Kamakura, *ninsō-gaki* or 'personal descriptions.' They were accompanied by a command, that if I should discover a man and his wife, whose appearances coincide with the descriptions, they should be caught and delivered to the authorities. I was astonished to find that every item exactly applies to your case. I was then, for the first time, convinced that you were Iinuma Katsugorō and Hatsuhana, who are said to be wandering in search of their enemy. Now that your 'personal descriptions' are circulated, it is dangerous for you to stay in these parts any longer. I was so anxious for your safety, that I

had this wagon hastily built, in order that you, Hatsuhana, might wheel away Katsugorō in it to some place of safety. With this wagon it is not difficult for you, lady, to draw your husband anywhere you choose. I advise you both to leave here as soon as possible."

Katsugorō and Hatsuhana were so filled with gratitude at the old man's words, that they burst into tears.

Tokuyémon presented them with some money, and bidding the weeping couple farewell, departed reluctantly.

Katsugorō followed the dwindling figure of the old man with devoted eyes, and said between his sobs: "What a vast difference there is between some men! On one hand we see a benevolent man like Tokuyémon, while on the other a bad man like Kōzukō. What a rascal the man must be to hunt us up, even in these remote solitudes. How and when can I attain my purpose, as long as I remain in this crippled and sickly condition? I surely was born under an evil star!"

"Oh, don't give way to despair," said Hatsuhana. "I have invoked the god Gongen of Hakoné, for your recovery. I'm sure that through

his divine favour, you will soon be all right. Don't be depressed or melancholy, my dear husband!"

"It has become quite dark," said Katsugorō, cheering himself up. "It seems the moon has set in. Well, from Tokuyémon's words, it looks as if we must go somewhere or other to-morrow. Your having mentioned the god Gongen of Hakoné suggests to me that Hakoné is the best place to attain our purpose. You see, Hakoné is the main artery of the Tōkaidō, and all travellers between Kwantō and the western provinces must pass through there. If we go there, and abide our time, I hope that one day we shall not only be able to come across our enemy, but also my servant Fudesuké, who must be looking for me. Let us go there at once, my wife."

Hatsuhana readily approved of his plan, and they set about making necessary preparations for the next day's journey.

Suddenly the revengeful *daikwan*, with many peasants, made his appearance. They attacked the astonished couple with poles and bamboo sticks; but although he was crippled, Katsugorō bravely defended himself with his sword, and Hatsuhana with her skill in *jūjutsu*, seized the

arm of every assailant, and threw him down. While the *mêlée* was at its height, a traveller happened to pass there. He took pity on the couple and fought on their side with all his strength. The governor and the peasants were all more or less injured, and soon took to their heels.

Katsugorō, groping in the darkness, whispered: "Where are you, Hatsuhana? Are you wounded?"

"Thank you, Katsugorō," answered Hatsuhana. "I am all right, but are you hurt?"

"No. I am not. Who was it who helped to defend us?"

"I have no idea."

The traveller in question was listening to their talk, and walked up to them. "You are Inuma Katsugorō, I believe," asked he.

"Well!" said Katsugorō with surprise. "Who are you, sir?"

"I am Fudesuké. Am I not right in supposing that you are Inuma Sama?"

"Are you indeed Fudesuké? I am so glad to meet you!"

"I am also very glad to meet you, my lord!"

Fudesuké had been searching for Gōsuké in vain, for several years, and had almost despaired

of ever meeting him. Then he had wandered from province to province for a few more years in search of Katsugorō. Now master and servant met after ten long years' separation, and their joy knew no bounds. Katsugorō introduced Fudesuké to his wife, and they all conversed about their sufferings and adventures. When Katsugorō talked of his disease, and how he and his wife had been reduced to begging, Fudesuké became speechless with grief.

Before daybreak, the three of them set out on their journey, Katsugorō riding in the wagon, and Hatsuana and Fudesuké drawing it.

V

SEVERAL days later, after some adventures and great toil, Katsugorō, his wife, and servant arrived at Hakoné. There they found a good hiding-place in an unfrequented and lonely place. Fude-suké disguised himself as a beggar, and wandered about the neighbouring district to gather information about Kōzuke's movements. Hatsu-hana, for her part, went every morning and evening to the waterfall of Shirataki at Tō-no-sawa, and for a penance stood right below the column of icy water for some time, fervently praying to the god Gongen to cure her husband's lameness.

In the Amida-ji temple, which stood at the eastern foot of the Hakoné mountains, were the mausolea of the ancestors of Hōjō Ujimasa. One day, towards the end of autumn, in honour of the five hundredth anniversary of the demise of Hōjō Tokimasa, religious services were held in the magnificent temple on a grand scale, and liberal alms were given away. Paupers and beggars thronged

to the temple from far and near in numberless crowds, to get these alms.

When alms had been given to all of them, three beggars came from somewhere, and asked the relief officers: "We have come late, and so have received no alms. Pray give us something."

The officers were surprised at their curious attire and strange appearance. Their nicknames excited their curiosity still more. One was called "Sea-slug," the second "Angler," and the third "Bear." The officers promptly gave them rice and money, and they were conducted to a courtyard near the temple, and treated to nice dishes and plenty of *saké*.

Katsugorō supposed that his enemy Kōzūkō would attend the religious services; so he put on the dress of a wretched beggar, and conveyed in the wagon by Hatsuhanā, went to the temple grounds.

"You must feel very cold," said Hatsuhanā. "As this is a mountainous district, the snow is already falling, while the maple leaves still remain."

"Oh, I am quite comfortable in the wagon," said Katsugorō. "Here I can stand the cold more easily. But you, who are dragging my heavy



Conveyed in the waggon by Hatsuana, he went to the temple grounds

cart, must suffer severely from the cold. I am very sorry for you, and heartily thank you, my dear wife!"

"Oh, don't talk like that! A man should not thank his wife. By the bye, I think our enemy——"

"Hush!" interrupted Katsugorō. "Walls have ears! Take care!"

"I am sorry," said Hatsuhana looking about her in alarm.

At this moment the three above-mentioned beggars, flushed and intoxicated, tottered out of the courtyard. When Sea-slug saw Katsugorō and his wife, his face became sullen, and he grumbled:

"Look there, comrades! Why should such a miserable cripple have so beautiful a wife? What an ill-assorted couple! Such injustice offends me. But I feel still more upset to think of the folly of the relief officers, who gave us beggars plenty of rice and money, and entertained us with *saké* and good food. The luxurious alms are paid for at the expense of farmers and merchants who are burdened with heavy taxes. Surely such treatment of beggars tends to increase their number. The authorities are very foolish."

"Nonsense!" said Bear laughing heartily. "You are indeed ungrateful to grumble at such liberal charity. Your sullen looks and unreasonable complaints make me laugh. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Then Angler burst into tears, and said: "I am sorry about to-day's magnificent gifts. I have not offered any incense sticks or a single flower to the spirits of my parents, even on the anniversaries of their deaths. Why, therefore, should I have been treated to such good food and alms? My parents must be grieving at the *Meido*, to have had such an undutiful son as I! My heart is filled with grief, brothers."

"Stop talking nonsense, comrades," said Bear again laughing heartily. "How can you grumble and weep so, on such a lucky day! Cheer up!"

As they talked and wept, the beggars became so intoxicated that at last they lay down on the ground and fell asleep.

Presently Bear, who was none other than Fude-suké in disguise, softly rose from his feigned sleep, and approaching Katsugorô, whispered: "I have good news for you, my lord. I have just heard that Hôjô Ujimasa will pass Hakonô to-day, on his way to pay a visit of homage to His Highness

the Regent. Our enemy Gōsuké will be among his retinue, and the party will take their mid-day meal at Ōiso. I will go there at once, and see what Gōsuké is doing, and I shall soon be back."

"Your news is indeed good, Fudcsuké. Go as quickly as you can."

"Farewell, my lord and lady."

When his servant had departed for Ōiso, Katsugorō's spirits rose, and he whispered to his wife: "Our opportunity has come at last. We can now take vengeance on our enemy."

To their astonishment, Angler and Sea-slug suddenly sprang to their feet.

"Inuma Katsugorō and Hatsuhana!" they cried aloud. "You are our prisoners! If you make any resistance you shall die! Lord Hōjō sent us out as spies."

With these words they sprang at Katsugorō. The latter pleaded: "You are mistaken, sirs. I am not he." But they would not listen to his denial, and seized him on either side. Katsugorō, who was sitting, pinioned their arms, and threw them violently on to the ground.

Suddenly the window of the temple parlour opened, and a man walked on to the verandah.

Katsugorō and Hatsuhana turned to look at him, and were dumbfounded to see their mortal enemy Gōsuké himself.

Katsugorō involuntarily limped out of the wagon, and looking fiercely at Gōsuké, he seized the hilt of his sword, and cried:

"I am glad to meet you, Satō Gōsuké! I have suffered for many long years in search of you. My opportunity for revenge has come! Come, prepare to fight with me!"

Hatsuhana also drew her dirk, and cried:

"My father has committed suicide on your account. His death shall now be revenged!"

"Enemy of my brother!"

"Murderer of my father!"

Gōsuké coolly smoked his pipe at his ease and leisure.

"Fools!" he said contemptuously. "It is rather bold for a crippled beggar to try and wreak his vengeance on me! You are completely in my power. Katsugorō, if you will give me Hatsuhana, for whom I have yearned so long, I will spare your life."

"Nonsense! I may be a cripple, but I will never give you Hatsuhana!"

"Humph! What do you say, Hatsuhana?"

"I would sooner kill myself, than yield to your wishes."

"You won't obey me either? Then I must show you something which will surprise you."

He ordered his retainers to bring out a woman who was bound and gagged.

The unfortunate couple were amazed to recognize Sawarabi, Hatsuhana's mother. Gōsuké smiled sarcastically. "See!" he said. "I have a great deal of power and authority, Hatsuhana. I have ruined your house, and arrested your mother. If you will give up your crippled husband and yield to me, I will restore your house, and consider Sawarabi as my mother-in-law. If you refuse, I will kill your mother and your husband. Their fate entirely depends on your answer. Let me hear it at once."

When he heard these cruel words, Katsugorō gnashed his teeth in mortification. He turned pale as death and fainted. The amazed Hatsuhana rushed up to him, and tried to restore him to consciousness.

Gōsuké stepped down from the verandah, and

catching Katsugorō by the collar of his *kimono*, said:

"Come! Take your revenge on me now, cripple!—Draw your sword, weakling!—Do you still defy me, Hatsuhana? Won't you yield to me yet? Your silence expresses refusal, I suppose. Well then, I must employ my last resource. Kill that old woman! I will see to this cripple myself."

So saying, the cold-blooded villain drew his great sword. At this critical moment an idea crossed Hatsuhana's mind. She said resignedly: "I must submit to your wishes, sir."

"I am glad to hear that. If you will indeed obey me, I will spare their lives." He then gave orders for the old woman's ropes to be untied.

At his command, Gōsukō's retainers unbound Sawarabi, removed the gag from her mouth, and allowed her to join Hatsuhana. The mother and daughter embraced each other, and shed bitter tears, both for sorrow and for joy.

In a little while Sawarabi wiped her tears and said: "I can well understand your state of mind, daughter. Go and serve Sir Kōzuke."

"I admire your resolution," said Katsugorō, who had recovered from his swoon. Then he

cast glances at her, and by means of gestures without words, he bade her yield to Gōsuké's desire. He wished her to set his mind at ease and seize a chance to kill him.

The clever Hatsuhana answered him, also with meaning glances, that she would do her best.

She then said: "Take care of yourselves, my mother and husband, and do not be anxious about me."

She again burst into tears, because she feared that she would never see her beloved mother and husband again.

"Now, Hatsuhana," said Gōsuké triumphantly, "let us spend the first night of our honeymoon by having a pleasant time at the Kikuyakata Hotel at Odawara."

With these words he took the weeping woman by the hand and hurried away, accompanied by his retainers.

Left behind, Sawarabi and Katsugorō were overwhelmed and speechless with emotion.

After a pause, Katsugorō's feelings got the better of him, and he burst forth:

"How can a weak girl kill Gōsuké? Poor girl!

She has only gone to die." So saying, he wept passionately, the tears fast rolling down his cheeks.

"Your sorrow is natural," said Sawarabi, pretending to be brave. "But it cannot be helped. See, even I, who am her mother, have stopped crying. Surely, Katsugorō, it is unmanly for a man to weep like that."

"I should be a devil if I did not weep like this! I fear that Hatsuhana has by this time been killed by that fiend Gōsuké."

He took out a small bell, and sounding it, prayed to Buddha. The mother joined in the prayer, saying: "*Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Butsu!*"

While they were fervently praying, a dim figure of a young woman appeared, and approached near to them. They looked intently at it, and were astonished to see that it was Hatsuhana.

"How did you make your escape, daughter?" asked the mother.

"How glad I am to see you, dearest wife," said Katsugorō. "Tell me quickly! Have you killed Gōsuké?"

"Alas, no!" answered Hatsuhana, sorrowfully.

"Then why have you come back, craven girl?" scolded the mother.

"I made a vow to purify myself in the waterfall of Shirataki twice a day for a hundred days, to pray the god Gongen to cure my husband's lameness. This morning I took the ninety-ninth ablution, and once more will complete my vow. I have come back through indescribable difficulties and danger to make the final ablution. Yes, I have returned to fulfil my vow, and to see whether Gongen will answer my prayers, and cure my husband's lameness. I must now go, and offer my last penance."

She ran up the cliff as she spoke, trampling upon the scattered maple leaves, and soon found herself in front of the waterfall. She plunged into the basin of the fall with a splash, and stood just below the column of icy water, and prayed fervently with clasped hands and closed eyes. As she stood there with her raven-black hair flowing down on her shoulders, and covering the greater part of her face, she presented a ghastly sight.

Sawarabi and Katsugorō were so inspired by her enthusiasm, that they also clasped their hands and earnestly prayed. As it chanced, one of Gōsuké's spies was lurking in the background and seizing the opportunity given him by their

prayer, he suddenly cut at Katsugorō from behind. Katsugorō perceived the flash of his sword, and in a moment avoided the stroke. He sprang to his feet, and the next moment the spy's head fell from his shoulders, down to the ground.

"*Yah, Katsugorō!*" exclaimed Sawarabi wonder-struck at what she saw; "have your legs recovered their strength?"

"Yes, strange to say, they have! I am cured!" cried Katsugorō noticing the fact for the first time. "Hatsuhana's prayers have been answered!"—he danced for joy—"May Gongen be praised."

"Daughter!" cried Sawarabi loudly, "Gongen has answered your prayers, and your husband's legs are cured. Be rejoiced, Hatsuhana!"

When she heard this cry, Hatsuhana opened her eyes and said, "What glad news! Thanks be to Gongen!" At the next moment her figure suddenly vanished, and could not be seen again.

In the meantime Fudesuké returned, and seeing Katsugorō on his feet, exclaimed: "Are you able to stand, my lord? Has your strength returned?"

"Yes, I can stand," cried Katsugorō joyfully. "My legs have renewed their strength, and I can fight as stoutly as before."

"How pleased I am to hear that, my lord"; he paused, and then continued with fast-falling tears: "I am overcome with grief to have to tell you that Hatsu-hana has met a cruel death at the hands of Gōsuké."

When they heard this, Sawarabi and Katsugorō were struck with wonder and sorrow.

"How can that be?" said Katsugorō. "She was here only a moment ago. But strange to say, her figure suddenly vanished when her prayers were answered and I rose to my feet."

Then Fudesuké told how Hatsu-hana had attempted Gōsuké's life. The villain had become mad with anger and disappointment, and killed her in a most cruel manner. Fudesuké had actually seen her dead body. Her mother was overcome and fell to the ground in a swoon.

"Then did we see only her ghost?" exclaimed Katsugorō, bursting into tears. "How grateful I am, dearest wife, to think that even after your death, you came here as a ghost, and prayed in the waterfall for my sake! My thanks are too deep for expression, Hatsu-hana!"

Katsugorō and Sawarabi somewhat recovered their spirits, when Fudesuké told the glad news

that their enemy Gōsuké would surely pass Hakoné the following morning, with Hōjō Ujimasa's retinue.

There was no time for delay, so the three of them, making necessary preparations, started for the summit of the Hakoné mountains, to lie in wait for Gōsuké.

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In the meantime, Hōjō Ujimasa and his large retinue were now passing in a procession along the plain on the summit of the Hakoné Mountains. As they were proceeding on their way, Katsugorō and his assistants suddenly sallied forth from a bush near by. They quickly attacked a palanquin in which the enemy was believed to be riding. The numerous *samurai*, who guarded the palanquin, resisted them violently. Katsugorō and Fudesuké cut and hewed at them with all their strength. Ujimasa and his retainers were so alarmed at their mighty strokes, that they fled in all directions. Gōsuké, waiting his opportunity, had stepped out of the palanquin, and was about to flee after his comrades, when Fudesuké caught him by the arm, and cried:

"Now you coward, Satō Gōsuké! Have you forgotten me?"

"So it is you, Fudesuké! Your blood shall cause my sword to rust."

They fought with might and main. During the fight Fudesuké stumbled over a stone, and fell on his back. Sawarabi rushed to his rescue and fought with Gōsuké. Meanwhile Fudesuké sprang to his feet, and ran to aid Sawarabi. Katsugorō, who had been a little distance away in pursuit of the fleeing foes, returned. He bade Sawarabi and Fudesuké keep a look-out over the rallying enemies, and immediately attacked Gōsuké single-handed.

The villain defended himself with desperate courage, but he was no match for our hero. He reeled and the point of his sword began to waver. At last Katsugorō cut his antagonist down, and stabbing him in the throat, cried: "My brother is now revenged!"

Sawarabi and Fudesuké ran up to the dying man and stabbed him also, crying:

"My husband and daughter are now revenged!"

"My lord is now revenged!"

In recognition of their perseverance and heroic revenge, the Regent Taikō ordered that Katsugorō should succeed to his dead brother Sampei's estate, and appointed Fudesuké Katsugorō's chief retainer. Katsugorō treated Sawarabi with the kindness and respect due to his wife's mother, and the three of them led a happy and prosperous life to the end.

The Miracle at the Ferry of Yaguchi

From

The Shinrei Yaguchi no Watashi

By

Hiraga Gennai

The Miracle at the Ferry of Yaguchi

I



THE Emperor Go-Daigo reigned between the years A.D. 1319 and 1339. During his latter days the traitor Ashikaga Taka-uji set up another Emperor in the person of Prince Toyohito, who was a kinsman of Go-Daigo. Thus it came to pass that the old Japanese saying, "Just as there is one sun in Heaven, so there is one emperor on Earth," was contradicted by the fact that two emperors reigned at one and the same time, and they and their sons contended with each other for the sovereignty for more than half a century. During this time, Go-Daigo's line was known as the Southern Dynasty, and the other as the Northern Dynasty.¹

¹ History states that the Emperor Go-Daigo, under the pressure of Taka-uji's forces, took refuge in the year 1336 in Yoshino, which place is about fifty miles south of Kyōto. His dynasty remained there about fifty years. The usurping dynasty reigned at the Capital. Hence the appellations of Northern and Southern

This state of affairs was very similar to the Wars of the Roses in English History.

The Southern Dynasty was the legitimate line, so all the loyal patriots espoused its cause; but Taka-uji's forces were so powerful, that Kusunoki Masashigé, Nitta Yoshisada, and many other heroes, were slain in the struggle against him.

Nitta Yoshi-oki, who was as brave as his father Yoshisada, now became a pillar of the Southern Court. The Emperor Go-Murakami, the son of Go-Daigo, commanded him to march to Kamakura in order to subjugate Taka-uji. But Yoshi-oki earnestly remonstrated with the Emperor, saying that it was not the right time to punish the traitor. The latter's army was too powerful, so it was absolutely necessary for the Southern Court to drill its troops for a few years, and lay in a store of provisions and ammunition, before it could hope to conquer the enemy. But the Emperor refused to listen to Yoshi-oki's suggestions, for

Dynasties. But the author is not accurate concerning the location of the two Imperial Courts, and from the statement that Yoshiminé resorted to the gay quarters, and Yoshi-oki visited the Shrine of Hachiman, before his departure for Musashi, he seems to locate the Southern Court at Kyōto, and the Northern Court at Kamakura, or some such place.

he was influenced by some powerful court nobles who were in traitorous communication with the Northern Court, and were plotting to destroy Yoshi-oki. The latter therefore had no choice but to reluctantly undertake the battle.

His brother Yoshiminé, a young and finely built warrior, had secretly taken to visiting the gay quarters of the Capital. There, he fell in love with a celebrated beauty named Utena, with whom he had exchanged vows of fidelity. One of his boon companions was a *samurai* named Takezawa Kemmotsu, who was a great villain. His father had been one of Nitta Yoshisada's retainers, but he was like a weathercock, and had early gone over to Taka-uji. He resolved to make an end of Yoshi-oki, in order to court the favour of the chieftain. He found out that Yoshiminé had begun to lead a gay life, so he also often visited the pleasure quarters *incognito*, and succeeded in obtaining access to him. The crafty rascal wormed his way into Yoshiminé's good graces, through whose recommendations he had treacherously become one of General Yoshi-oki's retainers. In his favour he had speedily risen, until he was now the captain of a regiment.

The day appointed for the march arrived. General Yoshi-oki, accompanied by a large retinue, visited the Shrine of Hachiman, the God of War, to pray for the fortune of his army, and to parade his troops in the field adjacent to the Shrine. All his officers, including Yoshiminé and Kemmotsu, sat in state in the hall of worship.

When the prayers were ended, Yoshi-oki said to Kemmotsu: "I think we shall fight with Ashikaga Taka-uji, on the plain of Musashino.¹ I suppose you who are a native of Musashi Province, are well acquainted with the topography of the plain. I therefore appoint you guide to our troops, and your regiment shall be the vanguard."

Kemmotsu bowed his head with reverence, and answered with a feigned air of gratitude:

"I cannot express my feelings of pleasure, my lord. I am only a new-comer, and therefore it is a great honour to be favoured with this important task. My abilities are poor, but I shall do my best to give you satisfaction."

Just at that moment, a sudden gust of wind blew out all the lights on the altar. All present were speechless with horror. Yoshi-oki took the

¹ The place where Tokyo now lies.

event to be an omen of his defeat in the forthcoming battle. He therefore bade his brother remain in the Capital, and do his utmost to protect the Imperial Court. Yoshiminé begged to be allowed to participate in the battle, but his request was refused. Yoshi-oki then produced two beautiful arrows. These arrows were respectively called "Suiha" and "Hyōha," or "Water Destruction," and "War Destruction," and were famous treasures of the Nittas. Tradition says that a great master of archery in ancient China, named Yō-Yuki, had made his daughter Shokwa give them to Minamoto-no-Yorimitsu, an ancestor of the Nittas, in a dream. Then Yoshi-oki handed them to Yoshiminé, and said:

"Take special care of these arrows. I have heard that our enemy Taka-uji who is said to be a descendant of General Yorimitsu, wishes to possess them. If I should take them, and unfortunately fall on the battlefield, he may obtain them from me. So I order you to keep them with you, and once again I tell you to remain here, and do your utmost to guard the Imperial Court from danger."

This command was so peremptory, that Yoshiminé did not dare to repeat his entreaty.

"Your commands shall be obeyed, sir," was his reply.

Then Yoshi-oki summoned his officers and men, and after bidding his brother farewell, set out for Musashi.

Yoshiminé was left alone, arrows in hand, gazing ruefully in the direction of the advancing troops, until they had disappeared from sight. While he stood thus gazing vacantly into space, suddenly there arose the sound of loud laughter and animated conversation. Presently, to his surprise and pleasure, his sweetheart Utena appeared, attended by some girls and buffoons. She ran up to him.

"How glad I am to see you, Lord Yoshiminé!" said she, her face beaming with joy. "I heard that you were starting for battle to-day, so I came here some time ago, with my people, to bid you farewell. We hid ourselves behind the hedges and saw what happened. You can imagine my joy when I heard that you were to remain here in the Capital! How glad I am!"

"Allow us to congratulate you on your mutual happiness, Lord Yoshiminé, and fair Utena," cried all the buffoons and girls, with one voice. "We will drink to your health!"

So saying, they clasped the young warrior by the hand and led him into a tea-house close by. There they spread the table for lunch, and produced some *saké* which they had brought, and entertained him with liquor and music. He was soon in a jovial mood and drank so heavily that he dropped asleep. Soon afterwards, Utena and the other girls went away, and the buffoons seizing the opportunity, softly approached the soundly sleeping warrior, stole his arrows, and escaped unnoticed.

Some minutes later, Yoshiminé awoke and looked about him; but alas! his arrows were missing. He was sure that they had been stolen by spies of the enemy. What excuse could he find to escape the blame of such negligence? He was so overwhelmed with sorrow and despair, that he drew his dirk from its sheath, and was about to stab himself in the abdomen, when Utena, who had just returned, seized his wrist, and bursting into tears, said: "Don't be so rash! I can quite understand your sorrow, but if you kill yourself, who would search for the arrows? Someone must let Lord Yoshi-oki know of this misfortune, or the arrows will never be restored. This trouble

is my fault; the responsibility must rest on me. Let us search for the arrows together, even if we have to travel throughout Japan—nay, to the end of the world. So the sooner we can set out the better.”

At her advice, Yoshiminé took heart and abandoned the idea of committing suicide. He then began to make preparations to search for the arrows. At this moment, the erstwhile buffoons appeared on the scene, dressed in full armour, at the head of a party of soldiers.

“Prepare for death, Yoshiminé!” cried they. “We are retainers of Lord Ashikaga Taka-uji. We waited on you, disguised as buffoons, in order to steal your arrows. Now that we have secured them, we will take your head to present it to our lord.”

Yoshiminé was highly incensed, and encountered the soldiers with his great sword, and fought desperately for a while. But, although he was a master-hand at fencing, it was impossible for him to face such odds. He was gradually put on the defensive, and it looked every moment as if he would be struck down. But fortune favoured him. Just at that moment a brave officer of

Yoshi-oki's, named Shinozuka Hachirō, who had failed to arrive at the hour appointed for the march, happened to make his appearance. He rushed to Yoshiminé's rescue, and attacked the soldiers fiercely. After fighting for a little while, he killed the buffoons and some of the soldiers, and put the rest to flight. He then urged Yoshiminé and his sweetheart to escape, and when they were well out of the way, the hero ran to overtake the marching army.

II

THE armies met on the plain of Musashino, and a bloody battle followed. The Imperial troops fought so bravely, that the traitor's army, although it was far superior in numbers, showed signs of being defeated. To rally the wavering troops, Eda Hangwan, who was one of Taka-uji's generals, fought desperately, whereupon they were restored to order, and Yoshi-oki's army in its turn was thrown into confusion.

"Our men are cowards," cried Takezawa Kemmotsu, plunging into Eda's ranks, and fighting with great courage. His strokes were so mighty that Eda and his men took to their heels. Kemmotsu overtook him, and they engaged in single combat. After fighting for some time they threw their swords down, and grappled with each other with Herculean strength. They looked around them, and finding that nobody was near, they each said, "It is not necessary for us to fight any longer." As they spoke, they unclasped their arms and rose to their feet.



But a warrior seized the tail of his horse

"Eda," whispered Kemmotsu, "you fled very skilfully."

"No," replied Eda laughingly, "your chase was far better than my flight, I think."

"As we are both so skilful, I am sure that the sagacious Yoshi-oki cannot suspect our tricks."

"That is true. It will be very easy for us to entice him to the ferry of Yaguchi, and thus lead him to his ruin——"

At this moment, they were startled to hear a tumult of war-shouts, and the clattering of hoofs. They hastily took up their swords and battled with each other for a little while, and as before Eda took to flight, and Kemmotsu pursued him.

With regard to Yoshi-oki, he was determined to search out Taka-uji, and to fight with him in single combat, in order to decide the issue. Therefore he spurred his steed and began to gallop towards the enemy's ranks. But a warrior wearing a *mino* or straw waterproof over his armour, and whose face was almost completely muffled in a hood, sprang forward, and firmly seizing the tail of his horse, drew the animal back. "What insolence!" cried the General with intense irritation. "Let go your hold, rascal!"

With these words, he gave his horse a sharp cut with his whip. The swift-footed steed, feeling the sting of the whip, galloped on again. But the masked warrior did not loose his firm hold on the horse's tail, and was dragged some way. In the confusion his hood fell off, and his face was exposed to view. Yoshi-oki scrutinized him carefully, and was astonished to recognize his retainer Yura Hyōgo, whom he had ordered to stay in charge of his castle at Nitta, which was situated in the province of Kōzuke.

"Why are you here, Hyōgo?" cried Yoshi-oki angrily. "Why have you come to the battle-field? Why are you trying to stop me?"

"Excuse the liberty I am taking, my lord," replied Hyōgo, bursting into tears, "but I feel that it is my duty to say that I think it is unbecoming to your lordship, who is the commander-in-chief, to resort to such rash and brutal methods. I have listened eagerly to all the reports of the war, and have gathered that you are resolved to fight to the death. I therefore left Minasé Rokurō in charge of the castle, and hurried alone here to try and dissuade your lordship, by any means in my power, to change your rash intentions. If your

lordship should be killed by any rash deed on your part, who is there to guard the Emperor and accomplish the great task of subduing the traitor? Think carefully over the matter, before you decide to proceed, my lord."

Hyōgo had scarcely spoken, when Kemmotsu came up, carrying two or three heads.

"I have glad news for your lordship," said he fervently. "The traitor has found it impossible to resist the fierce attack of our troops, and his regiments have fled like cowards to Kamakura. Your lordship had better avail yourself of this opportunity. You should give chase to the enemy without a moment's delay. You can, then, I am sure, readily take Taka-uji's head. Your chance has come, my lord."

The excited General was so delighted to hear this news, that he could not afford to hesitate. He immediately ordered his troops to advance in pursuit of the retreating enemy. He then spurred his horse on, in order to ride at the head of his ranks. But Hyōgo grasped his horse's bit, in order to keep the animal back. Yoshi-oki cried out with rage, and raising his war-fan, he soundly beat his retainer about the face with

it. The faithful *samurai*, however, did not let go his hold, but exerted all his strength to keep back the horse. Yoshi-oki became furiously angry.

"Loosen your hold at once, you insolent wretch," roared he. "I discharge you! You are no longer one of my retainers,"—and fiercely kicking Hyōgo, he galloped away.

Meanwhile Yoshi-oki's wife, Lady Tsukuba, and his only son Tokuju-maru a three-year-old child, resided in the castle at Nitta in Kōzuke, which was guarded by Minasé Rokurō, and a little garrison. They were waited upon by Hyōgo's wife, Minato, and the wives of the leading *samurai*. They fervently prayed for victory, and anxiously waited for the news of the battle at Musashino.

They were talking of the engagement when Hyōgo returned from the front, and gave them an account of the battle. "His lordship was so elated by the victory," he said, "that he thoughtlessly proposed to give chase to the fleeing enemy and attack his headquarters, Kamakura. I earnestly remonstrated with him, and told him that it was a rash and dangerous undertaking, but in vain. He not only turned a deaf ear to my words,

but became violently angry, and immediately dismissed me from his service, and rode away in hot pursuit of the enemy."

At this moment a warrior staggered into the courtyard. He was a ghastly-looking object, being covered with blood. "News! News!" he cried faintly, and fell to the ground. He was none other than Shinozuka Hachirō, mentioned above. He was severely wounded in several places, and gasping for breath. Hyōgo rushed to him and cried: "Courage, Hachirō! Give us the news of the battle."

The wounded man made an effort to pull himself together, and gasped out: "After the victory of the Imperial troops, our lord ordered them to pursue the enemy, and he hastened with them towards Kamakura. But previous to this, the traitor Takezawa Kemmotsu, with the assistance of Eda Hangwan, had given orders for the bottom of the Yaguchi ferry-boat, of the River Tama, to be bored through, and the hole to be temporarily filled with a plug. The ferryman then waited for our lord's arrival. He and some ten officers got on board, quite ignorant of the mean artifice which had been played on them. When the boat

was well under way in mid-stream, the boatmen purposely dropped their sculls as if by accident, and pretending to stoop in order to regain them, drew out the plug. They then plunged over the side of the boat, and swam to the bank. The water rushed into the boat, and rapidly filled it. Immediately afterwards Hangwan's troops appeared on one bank, and Kemmotsu's troops on the other, both uttering terrible war-shouts. They both came at the same moment, and shot a terrible shower of arrows at the unfortunate Lord Yoshi-oki and his officers. His lordship was infuriated at Kemmotsu's treachery, but it was impossible to fight under such adverse circumstances, so he stripped his abdomen, and stabbed himself to death. Then all the ten officers followed his example, and killed themselves. Seeing this, our troops were so disheartened, that they were easily and completely defeated by the traitor's army. Oh, it was terrible! Mortally wounded as I am, I have come back to report all this to you. Now the time for my death has come! Farewell, my lady, and my friends!"

With these words, Hachirō suddenly drew out a dagger, and cutting his throat, soon breathed

his last. All were filled with horror and consternation at the dreadful news and ghastly sight. They were still in a state of stupefaction, when two or three soldiers on patrol rushed in, and reported that hostile troops were marching upon the castle. Soon afterwards Kemmotsu rode up to the other side of the moat, and made a fierce attack upon the building. After a severe struggle, most of the garrison fell, and the attacking troops captured the castle. But Hyōgo, his wife, and Rokurō, hastily disguised themselves, and made their escape, guarding Lady Tsukuba and their baby Lord Tokuju-maru. The poor fugitives wandered separately from place to place. Rokurō and Hyōgo suffered indescribable hardships for the sake of their young master. Rokurō lost his life in his faithful efforts, and Hyōgo killed his son Tomochiyo, a three-year-old child, to deceive Taka-uji's spies into believing that he had faithlessly murdered Tokuju-maru. Thus the trusty warrior was able to protect his infant master to the end.

III

THE ferry of Yaguchi, at which General Yoshi-oki died such a tragic death, was situated in the lower stream of the River Tama which flows about ten miles west of Tokyo. The ferryman was an old man named Tombei, and he was the incarnation of avarice and inhumanity. It was he who had, at the order of Takezawa Kemmotsu, bored the hole in the bottom of the boat and assisted him in the destruction of Yoshi-oki.

As a reward for so successfully accomplishing this villainous deed, Tombei had been rewarded by Taka-uji with a large sum of money. This money he had invested in gambling, and had speculated with it in various ways. These transactions had been fortunate, and his coffer had suddenly become full to overflowing. He was now a rich man, and well-known along the countryside. He had recently built a fine house with a splendid parlour upstairs. This house overlooked the river, and he was leading there a life of comfort with his only daughter, and his assistant boatman.

The boatman's name was Rokuzō, and he was as greedy a knave as his master.

Tombei was fat, heavily built, red-faced, and he had a demoniacal expression.

His daughter O-Funé was a striking contrast to him. She was a peerlessly beautiful maiden of eighteen summers, with a sweet disposition and graceful manner. The villagers were loud in her praise and called her, "a peacock born of a crow."

The avaricious Tombei was not content with his condition. He decorated his *tokonoma* or alcove with a scull and a straw waterproof, as mementos of the means by which he had bettered his circumstances. It was his burning ambition to "pile up a mountain of gold" by another mean artifice.

Kemmotsu had given him orders, that if he came across any Nitta fugitives, particularly Yoshiminé, he was to arrest them, and bring them to him. It had been arranged that, on his finding a refugee, Tombei should fire a rocket as a signal. On catching sight of the signal, trumpets should be blown in the neighbouring villages, and the villagers were to be on the alert not to let the

refugee escape. If he should be caught or killed, the announcement should be made by the beating of a drum. In the yard of Tombei's residence a rocket was always kept ready, and a large drum was hung in the room upstairs, so that preparations for an emergency had been made.

One evening after dusk Yoshiminé and his love Utena, who were quite ignorant of these arrangements, wandered to the ferry of Yaguchi on a weary journey to Nitta. Here Yoshiminé intended to gather together the remnant of Yoshioki's retainers, and with them form a basis to organize forces in order to subdue the traitor. Glancing at the stream, the young warrior called to mind the horrors of his brother's death, and shed bitter tears of mortification.

They were desirous of crossing the river, but there was no one there whom they could employ to take them. Yoshiminé then knocked at Tombei's door. The old ferryman and his assistant were absent, but O-Funé, who was in charge of the house, appeared.

"What do you want, sir?" she asked.

"We wish to cross the river. Please ask the ferryman to take us over."

The girl looked at him, and blushed "as red as a maple leaf." She had succumbed to his charms and had fallen in love with him at first sight.

"It is true we have boats," said she, "but these days the villagers keep vigilant watch for refugees, and so we never ferry travellers across after sunset. Furthermore the ferrymen are all away."

"We are pressed for time," said Yoshiminé with a look of perplexity. "There is no inn in these parts it seems, and night is fast falling. So please find some means of taking us over."

"Alas! That is quite impossible. If there is no inn, you can put up at my house to-night, sir."

"Then will you kindly allow us to do so?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Many thanks," said Yoshiminé, bowing to her, and calling to his betrothed to come in.

When O-Funé caught sight of the beautiful woman, she betrayed signs of disappointment.

Utena saluted her politely and O-Funé conducted the pair into the room upstairs.

As she came downstairs, O-Funé thought to herself: "What a splendid, noble-looking man he is! He is just the kind of man I should like to have for a husband. How happy I could be with him!"

I wonder what relation his companion is to him! I hope she is not his wife! If she is, I don't know what I shall do!"

As she was sitting thus wrapped in thought Yoshiminé came down and said: "Will you kindly give me a cup of tea?"

"With pleasure, sir," said the maiden, her heart beating fast. "May I make so bold as to ask you whether your companion is your sister or your lady, sir?"

Yoshiminé was surprised at this unexpected question, but the next instant he guessed what was passing in her mind.

"She is my sister," he answered. "She has been ill for a long time, so I am taking her to the Temple of Kwannon^{*} at Asakusa, to pray for her recovery."

"How glad I am to hear that!" said the girl, sighing with relief. "My lord, you may stay at my house as long as you choose, even ten or twenty days, nay ten or a hundred years." With these words she dropped her face, and clinging to his sleeve, would not let him go.

"You are very kind," said Yoshiminé. "You

^{*} The Goddess of Mercy.



She smiled archly and . . .

don't yearn for me in vain," and he pressed her hand.

Her cheeks were covered with blushes, and she drew closer to him. In another moment they were clasped in a close embrace. At that moment they heard footsteps outside. They were so startled that they sprang apart, and Yoshiminé hastened upstairs, leaving the girl behind.

O-Funé remained as one in a dream. Suddenly her father's assistant Rokuzō rushed in with a sword at his side and a fierce expression on his face. He said in a whisper: "I am sure the two people upstairs are Nitta refugees. Yes, the man must be Yoshiminé." With these words he was on the point of darting up, when the girl suddenly sprang to her feet, and barred his way.

"Rokuzō!" she cried. "What do you mean to do with the travellers?"

"Why, girl," answered he angrily. "I intend to bind them fast, and gain a reward. Out of my way!"

O-Funé reflected a moment and hurriedly made her plans. She smiled archly and said: "Well, I won't use force against you, Rokuzō. But you know the man is a strong warrior. I fear that

you may be beaten and hurt. If you risk your life merely to gain a miserable reward, all your fine speeches to me are but lies. You have often asked me to be your wife. If you wish to marry me, you must take care of yourself."

"Do you really mean what you say, my dear O-Funé?" asked Rokuzō, his tone suddenly softening. "I believe that you are enamoured of that fellow upstairs, and deceiving me to save his life."

"If you doubt me so much," answered she peevishly, "you had better do as you please."

"Well, then," said Rokuzō, bursting out into a cold sweat. "Do you intend to become my wife, if I——?"

"Yes, of course," assured she, looking at him tenderly. "If you understand that it is my intention to save you from getting hurt, it would be better for you to hasten, and consult my father about the matter. He has gone to the village headman's house."

"Well, then, I will go there and see him. While I am away, please take care not to let that fellow upstairs escape, my dear wife."

With these words, Rokuzō ran out joyfully.

O-Funé heaved a sigh of relief as she bolted the gate. She then returned to the room, and pondered as to how she could save Yoshiminé's life.

In the still watches of that night, when the crescent moon was sadly hanging in the sky, and the confused murmur of the stream alone broke the silence, two dark figures glided out of the bamboo brake, which was situated behind the yard of Tombei's house. They were the ferryman himself, and his assistant.

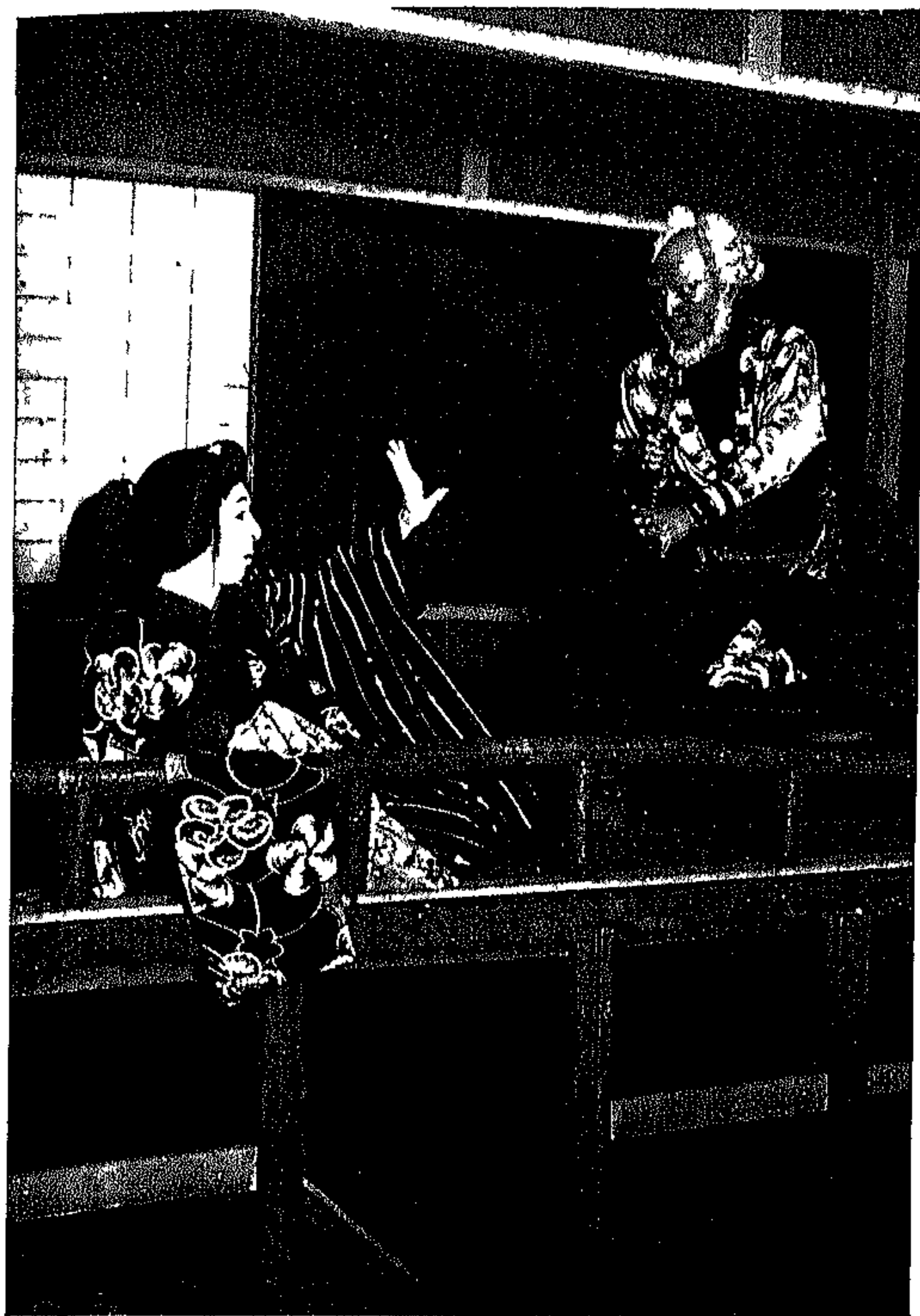
"We must make no noise," Tombei whispered to Rokuzō, "or my daughter may awake and hinder us, so I will steal in alone. You will keep a sharp watch outside, and if they attempt to escape, despatch them without a moment's delay."

The old man tried to open the gate, but he was so feeble that it would not open. He became impatient, and drawing his great sword, he cut a hole in the wall with it, and soon found himself inside. He then went underneath the upstairs parlour and thrust his sword through the floor with all his might. Immediately a piercing shriek was heard in the room and blood dripped down

along the sword. Rejoicing at his success, Tombei climbed a ladder, and kicking away the *shōji*, entered the room. He tore the bedclothes from off the bed, and looked at the face on which the moonbeams were shining brightly. Alas! It was not Yoshiminé, but Tombei's own daughter O-Funé, groaning, with the blood flowing fast from her wounds.

He was filled with astonishment, but instead of aiding the unfortunate girl, he roared out furiously: "Where have Yoshiminé and the woman fled to? Tell me at once!"

"Father!" said she in low and plaintive tones, "I am ashamed to confess the truth, but I fell deeply in love with the traveller, the first time I saw him. I was astonished to hear Rokuzō say that he was Yoshiminé. After sending Rokuzō away, I met Yoshiminé, and laid bare my secret to him. He said he could not marry me in this life, for I was the daughter of his brother's murderer. If, however, I could give him some proof that I did not share your opinions, he would gladly take me for his wife in the next world. I was overjoyed with his promise, but told him that there was great danger in his staying here longer.



Mr Utayemon as *O-Funé* (on the left), Mr. Danshirō as *Tombei* (on the right)

I therefore took him and his sister beyond the river, by boat——”

When he heard her words, Tombei flew into a terrible passion. Gnashing his teeth, and stamping on the mat, he roared: “Shameless wanton! For the sake of your love, you have disclosed your father’s great secret, and let a bird in his snare fly away.”

With these words, he fell upon her and struck her several times with his clenched fist.

“If you have any pity,” entreated O-Funé, failing under the double weight of her wound and these blows, “give up your evil intention and save Yoshiminé. Pray grant my request!”

“Pshaw!” said the unfeeling ruffian, smiling bitterly. “If I let Yoshiminé escape, I shall break my promise to Takezawa.”

The girl caught at his sleeve, but he thrust her aside and leaped down into the yard. Seizing the rocket which was standing there ready, he set fire to it. The signal went off with a loud report, and at the alarm trumpets were blown in the villages.

On hearing the sound, the dying maiden started up with amazement, and thinking that Yoshiminé was in imminent danger, she wept bitterly.

But she thought of a happy idea. Looking up at the drum which was hanging in the room, she said to herself:

"I have heard that this drum is to be beaten as a signal that a refugee has been caught. If they should hear it, they would cease to look for any one. Here is my chance of saving my dear Lord Yoshiminé."

Her courage revived when she thought this, and reaching out her trembling hand, she took the drum-stick and gave the drum one strong blow.

Rokuzō, who was on the watch downstairs, was amazed at the sound of the drum. He rushed up and tried to drag O-Funé away, but she made a desperate effort to push him off. While they were struggling thus, Tombei jumped into a boat and sculled it with might and main in pursuit of Yoshiminé.

When O-Funé saw her father in the boat, she became frantic with despair, and uttered several loud screams. "Father! Father!" she cried. "Wait just one moment!" It was in vain. Then she seized the drum-stick again, but Rokuzō prevented her once more. With desperate courage she drew a dirk, and cut at the rascal, who in trying to avoid the blade of her dagger, fell head-

foremost into the river. When she was thus freed from her antagonist, the girl seized the scabbard of the dirk, and beat the drum continuously. Tombei rowed and rowed with all his strength, and Rokuzō, being a powerful swimmer, in spite of his wound, swam skilfully across the swift current toward the opposite shore. In the meantime, O-Funé's strokes on the drum became weaker and weaker, until she fell to the mat utterly exhausted, and a moment later, breathed her last.

Tombei soon reached the shore, and leaping up the bank, ran fast. Yoshiminé, who was hiding behind a bush, suddenly rushed out with a drawn sword in his hand and cried: "Prepare for death, murderer of my brother!"

The old man was undaunted, and took up the challenge, and they closed in desperate single combat. But very soon Tombei accidentally stumbled, and Yoshiminé held him down, with the intention of cutting off his head. At this moment Rokuzō ran up, and catching Utena who was standing near, by the hair, cried: "Yoshiminé, if you kill my master, I will take revenge on this woman!"

Yoshiminé was quite taken aback at this threat

and involuntarily slackened his hold. Seizing the opportunity, Tombei shook himself free from the warrior's grasp, and in his turn, held the other down. Then Rokuzō came to assist his master and struck Yoshiminé severely with a stout pole, and the hapless *samurai* seemed to be on the verge of destruction. But at that moment, two white-feathered arrows came whizzing through the air and lodged in the throats of the villains, who fell to the ground dead.

Yoshiminé sprang up and gazed round to see what wonderful fate had saved him from the jaws of death. He then drew out the arrows and examined them carefully. To his great astonishment and boundless joy, they proved to be the arrows "Suiha," and "Hyōha," which had been stolen from him at the Capital. A paper was tied to one of them, and holding it in the light of the moon, he read the following:

"To YOSHIMINÉ,

The loss of these arrows would be a great disgrace to the Nittas. I have therefore seized them from the hands of the enemy, in order to give them back to you.

From your brother,
YOSHI-OKI."

Yoshiminé was filled with an ecstacy of joy, and turning to Utena, said: "How glad I am, my dear Utena. My brother is dead, but his spirit still remains in this world to protect us. The best means by which I can requite his great kindness is to gather together all loyal patriots and destroy the traitor, Taka-uji, and the cruel murderer of my brother."

At that moment numerous torchlights and lanterns were seen gleaming brightly on the opposite bank. It seemed as if a large number of men had come to pursue them. Yoshiminé and his love, in order to escape their foes, fled as fast as they were able.

Shortly afterwards, Takezawa Kemmotsu appeared with several soldiers. They instantly sprang into a boat and rowed with might and main. When the party had reached the centre of the stream a wonderful thing happened. A storm accompanied by thunder and lightning suddenly arose and the water was covered with huge billows. The soldiers were terrified at this awful sight, and dropping their oars, they left the boat to the mercy of the waves. Kemmotsu sprang up and glaring at the sky, cried: "Don't

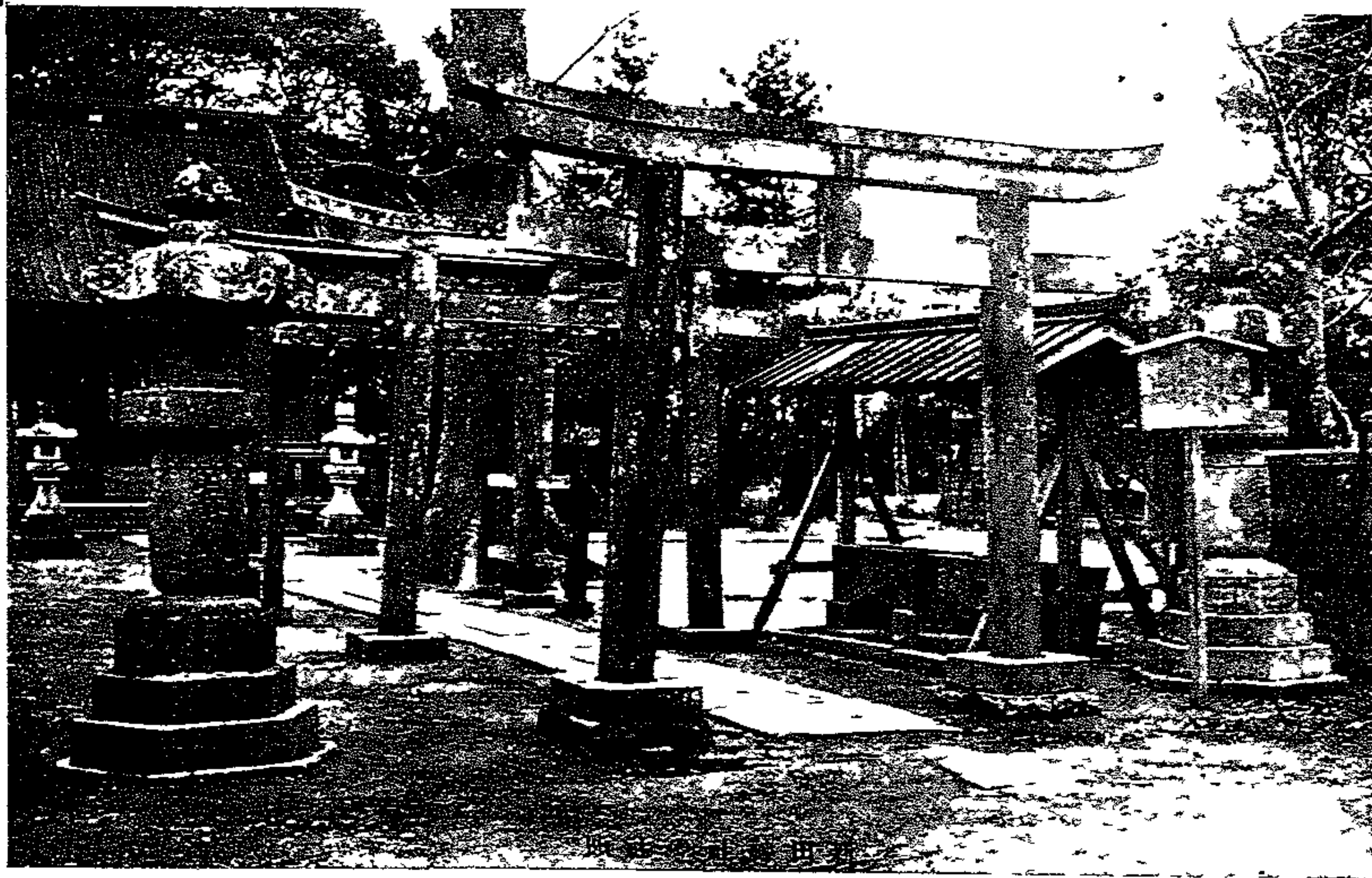
be afraid, my men. This storm is doubtless caused by the ghost of Yoshiminé." Hardly had these words left his lips, when a voice cried from overhead:

"Harken! Takezawa Kemmotsu. The spirit of Nitta Yoshi-oki, who was murdered here by means of your vile scheme, has returned to take its revenge on you."

Then waves as high as hills dashed against the boat and broke it in pieces, and all the soldiers were drowned. The stout-hearted Kemmotsu was not killed, however, and for some minutes he battled valiantly with the waves. Suddenly there was a loud peal of thunder, and the clouds parted. In the midst of them appeared the figure of Yoshi-oki, clad in armour and riding on horseback. Around him were standing the vivid figures of the ten officers who had shared his fate. The spectre of Yoshi-oki swept down upon Kemmotsu, and seizing his hair, cleft his head in two.

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Soon after the events narrated above had taken place, peace was concluded between the Southern and Northern dynasties. Taka-uji erected a



The Nitta Shrine

shrine at the ferry of Yaguchi, in memory of Nitta Yoshi-oki and his ten officers. Great festivities were held in honour of the completion of the shrine, at which Yoshi-oki's son Tokuju-maru, Yoshiminé, Yura Hyōgo, and several of Yoshiminé's retainers, were present, also some Imperial messengers. Crowds of people of the district gathered together and solemn and magnificent ceremonies were held. The Nitta Shrine, with the two famous arrows in its sanctuary, is still standing, and may be seen to the present day.

The Battles of Kokusunya

From

The Kokusunya Kassen

By

Chikamatsu Monzaemon

The Battles of Kokusenya

I



THE Emperor Shisō of the Ming dynasty of China was a feeble-minded and luxurious man. He kept a number of beautiful women in his palaces at Nanking, with whom he indulged in all kinds of sensual pleasures, both by day and night. The King of Tartary, taking advantage of the Emperor's weakness, made up his mind to undermine the Ming dynasty, and to take possession of the Empire. Therefore, with this end in view, he strenuously drilled his troops. But the imbecile Emperor was quite ignorant of the dark schemes of the Northern Chieftain; and he spent all his time enjoying himself in the harem with his concubines. Consequently the government of the Empire was entirely neglected, and it was an easy matter for the Tartar troops to march, at any moment, upon the castle.

Tei Shiryō, a trusted minister of the Emperor,

many times warned him of the approaching danger; but the Emperor not only refused to listen to his advice, but flew into such a terrible rage, that he deprived his faithful minister of his rank and office, and finally banished him from the Empire.

There was at that time attached to the Court a knavish flatterer named Ri Tōten. After the banishment of Tei Shiryō, the Emperor treated this rogue with such favour that he was promoted to the rank of Prime Minister. But this Ri Tōten had been treacherously holding secret communication with the Tartar King, and had been plotting to guide the Tartar army into the Imperial Castle, when a favourable opportunity should occur, in order that the Ming dynasty might be destroyed.

General Go Sankei soon saw through this hideous plot, and several times advised the Emperor to rid himself of the traitor. But the Emperor was completely deceived by Ri Tōten's oily and flattering speeches, and entrusted to him the management of all public affairs, both great and small.

One day an envoy of the Tartar King arrived, with many valuable gifts, and brought forth a request from his master that the Emperor's favourite concubine, Madame Kwasei, should be given to

him, for he wished to make her his queen, and thus ensure a firm friendship between the two powers. The Emperor and his Court were greatly amazed at this demand, as Kwasei was at that time hoping to give birth to a son and heir to the Ming throne. Ri Tōten tried to persuade the Emperor to agree to the request; but Go Sankei protested against it with great indignation, and ordered the Tartar King's gifts to be removed. The Tartar envoy, who was very enraged, replied: "If you refuse, I shall be obliged to use force, and carry off Madame Kwasei and the Emperor as prisoners." With these words, he was on the point of striding angrily from the presence of the Emperor, but Ri Tōten made an effort to pacify him. To make his appeal more forcible, he took a dagger in his hand and with it gouged out his own left eye, and placing it on a slab of ivory, handed it to the envoy, saying: "I, Prime Minister of China, respectfully present this to His Majesty, the King of Tartary, as a token of apology for the insult which General Go Sankei has offered to His Majesty, and to Your Excellency."

The envoy received it with great respect and departed.

Ri Tōten had done this painful deed by way of making a vow of allegiance to the King of Tartary. But the Emperor took it to be an act of noble self-sacrifice for his own sake, and bestowed greater favours than ever on this traitorous minister, until he thought he would give his younger sister, Princess Sendan, to him in marriage.

Princess Sendan was a beautiful and accomplished girl of sixteen summers, who was well versed in literature and intellectual in every way. The Emperor repeatedly urged her to accept Ri Tōten's suit, but she persistently refused. At last he thought of a plan. He ordered that two hundred of the beautiful inmates of his harem should be divided into two squadrons. Each member of one squadron was to bear a branch of flowering plum, and each member of the other was to bear a branch of cherry. The plum-blossom party was to be commanded by the Princess, and the cherry-blossom party by the Emperor himself, and in that manner a "battle of flowers" was to be fought. The Emperor suggested that the result of the battle should decide what answer his sister should give to Ri Tōten's proposal. The Princess agreed to this, and the two parties fought pellmell



A "battle of flowers" was to be fought

with loud cries. A brilliant spectacle was provided by the gay clothes of the young ladies fluttering in the air, and the beautiful petals of the flowers scattering around. Go Sankei heard the sound of the battle, and dressed from head to foot in a suit of mail, rushed in and was astonished at the sight. He seized the plum and cherry branches from the hands of the combatants, broke them to pieces, and drove off both squadrons. Then he knelt before the Emperor and fearlessly remonstrated with him: "This is not the time for Your Majesty to fight a 'battle of flowers.' The Northern barbarians are, even at this moment, eagerly watching for an opportunity to invade our country."

The Emperor flew into a violent and unreasonable rage, and raising his foot, he dealt the General a kick on the forehead.

Suddenly a confused sound of conches, drums, and deafening battle-shouts was heard from all sides. Go Sankei sprang to his feet, and rushing up the tower, looked eagerly about him. To his horror, he saw that the fields, mountains, and forests were covered with soldiers. Swarms of Tartars had arrived and were surrounding the palaces.

The Tartar General cried aloud: "Think you that the love of our King for Madame Kwasei' is genuine? Nay, it is all a pretence. His real object in asking for her, was that he might destroy the unborn heir to the Ming throne. Lord Ri Tōten gouged out his eye as a sign of allegiance to our King, and we have hastened therefore to attack you. Say! General Go Sankei! Will you take the Emperor and Madame Kwasei prisoners and surrender yourself to us with them?"

"Pshaw!" retorted Go Sankoi angrily, "so you barbarians wish to destroy the 'Great Light' dynasty which has ruled over this country for at least two centuries. You might as easily try to destroy a huge whale! Your best course is to turn and flee for your lives."

But his troops numbered scarcely more than one hundred men. It was impossible to fight against such tremendous odds. He gnashed his teeth and clenched his fists in mortification.

His wife Ryūka now appeared, bearing their infant on one arm, and leading Madame Kwasei by the other hand.

"Alas! Madame," she said, bursting into tears. "The Court nobles and ministers of state, down to

the officers and soldiers, have all taken the side of Ri Tōten, and only a few of us remain to support you!"

"It is useless to indulge in mere regrets," said Go Sankei, "now that matters have come to this pass. As Madame will shortly become the mother of an Imperial heir, we must take special care of Her Highness. I will therefore protect her myself, and fight my way to find some place of safety for her. Give the baby to me, and I will take care of it myself. As to you, my wife, you will attend to Her Highness Princess Sendan, and flee with her to the sea-shore."

He then went out, and cried aloud:

"Behold General Go Sankei, a loyal warrior of the Ming dynasty!" and gathering together his small band of soldiers, he plunged into the enemy's lines, and cut and hewed around him, as if he possessed supernatural powers.

Whilst Go Sankei was absent, the traitor Ri Tōten and his younger brother Ri Kaihō, forced their way into the inner apartments of the palaces. They seized the Emperor, and with great cruelty struck off his head. Ordering his brother to capture Madame Kwasei, Ri Tōten departed, taking

with him the head of the dead Emperor. When Ri Kaihō found Madame Kwasei, he bound her with ropes, and was about to take her a prisoner to the Tartar army, when Go Sankei returned to the palace.

When he caught sight of the Emperor's headless body, he was filled with consternation and sorrow. But mustering up his courage he seized his sword, and with a single blow, cleft Kaihō in two. He then released Kwasei, and beating off the pursuing troops, made his way with great difficulty to a sea-port, accompanied by her, and carrying his infant in his bosom.

As he intended to cross over to a place of safety he looked about the harbour, but could not see a single boat. While he stood there, not knowing what to do or where to turn, bullets were falling as thick as hailstones. Suddenly to his horror, a bullet struck Kwasei in the breast, and she immediately fell to the ground, dead and covered with blood.

The brave warrior burst into tears of grief and despair, and for a time was at a loss what to do.

However, he pulled himself together, and said:
"Her Highness is now no more but I think there

still remains some hope with her unborn babe. Oh, dear lady, for the sake of the Ming dynasty, I am compelled to cruelly desecrate your body! Pardon me!" So saying, he drew his sword and with its blade opened her body. The blood immediately gushed forth, but in the midst of it there appeared a beautiful boy, uttering his first cry of infancy. Go Sankei was overjoyed at seeing this, and he tore off the sleeve of the dead lady's dress and wrapped the baby in it. "Stay!" he reflected. "If the enemy discover the Royal mother's dead body, and find that the child is missing, they will search till they find it."

So drawing his dagger, he plunged it into his own child's heart, and put the tiny corpse into the dead lady's body. Then he said to himself: "All is well." After that he went away with the baby Prince in his bosom, hot tears of grief fast rolling down his cheek. It was a tragedy so terrible as to be almost inconceivable.

In the meantime, Go Sankei's wife Ryūka and Princess Sendan had also come to a place of safety. But, as they were hotly pursued by the enemy's troops, they hid among a thicket of reeds by the sea-shore. A Tartar officer named Godatsu took

a small boat and searched thoroughly all the creeks near them, until at last he discovered them. Quick as thought Ryūka seized his oar and struck him with all her strength. Losing his balance he went head foremost to the bottom of the sea, and when he rose again to the surface he was dead. Ryūka was delighted at her skill, and then, leading the Princess to the boat, was on the point of embarking with her, when about twenty soldiers appeared on the scene.

A severe struggle immediately took place, in which Ryūka succeeded in driving off the soldiers. But during the fight she unfortunately received a mortal wound. "Alas! Your Highness," said she, with groans. "I can accompany you no longer. You had better trust to the tide, and make your hiding-place wherever the boat carries you. May the God of the sea protect the sister of the Emperor."

With these words the dying woman exerted all her strength and pushed off the boat in which the Princess was seated. The boat, carried by the wind and ebb-tide, went farther and farther out into the open sea. Thus the two women weeping bitterly were separated for ever.

II

WE have seen that Tei Shiryō, the loyal minister of the Ming dynasty, had been banished by the Emperor Shisō. Afterwards he went over to Japan, and settled in a fishing village at Hirado, Kyūshū. Whilst there, he married a Japanese woman who bore him a son called Seikō, which name was afterwards changed to Kokusenya.

Kokusenya was brought up among ignorant fishermen, and his occupation was also fishing. He was distinguished alike for sagacity and energy. From childhood he was always a voracious reader of biographies of heroes; and when he became a young man he devoted his leisure time to a careful study of Chinese and Japanese classics, and of tactics and military arts, in which he attained wonderful proficiency. He afterwards wedded a Japanese woman named Komutsu, with whom he lived a happy married life.

One day, the young couple were wandering on the sea-shore collecting shell-fish. Suddenly they saw an enormous clam, which opened its shells

and spouted forth a column of water. Almost immediately afterwards, a snipe flew down, intending to make the shell-fish its prey. The eager bird hopped on to the clam, and thrust its sharp beak between its shells. The clam instantly shut its shells and the bird's beak was held fast. The snipe, disappointed to find that its antagonist was so brave, flapped its wings vigorously, shook its head, and struggled hard to break the clam on a rock. But it was not to be so easily vanquished. It tried its utmost to drag the snipe into the water.

The bird was irritated at this, and spreading its wings, it flew up about ten feet into the air; but the struggling clam was too heavy, so it fell to the earth again. Then it flew up, and fell down again several times. It seemed impossible to foretell which would be the victor, and when their combat would end.

Kokusenya looked intently at the scene for some minutes. Then he thought to himself: "I can see here a great secret in tactics. I have studied tactics under my father's tuition for many years, but the lesson I have learned to-day from the battle between the snipe and the clam is the greatest of all. The clam, relying on its hard

shells, did not expect an attack from a snipe. On the other hand, the snipe, proud of its sharp beak, was quite ignorant of the seizing powers of the clam. The snipe struggled to shake the clam off, but the clam would not loosen its hold. Both are now much too intent on their own respective purposes to pay any attention to anything else. So I can easily catch them both without the least effort. Hard shells or a sharp beak would be of no avail against me. A great tactical secret lies in this. One can easily conquer two heroes who are fighting each other. Well, I hear that in China, my father's country, the Ming dynasty and the King of Tartary are now at war with each other, and the Chinese Empire is in a state of great turmoil. I will take this opportunity to cross over to China and conquer the two powers that are fighting each other. It would be an easy task and I have made up my mind to try it."

Reflecting thus, Kokusenyā continued to watch the fight between the clam and the snipe. His wife, Komutsu, was quite unaware of her husband's heroic determination. Taking compassion on the frightened animals, she pulled out a hairpin, and with it opened the shells of the clam. The snipe

was delighted to find itself free and immediately flew away to some reeds which were growing at a little distance from that spot; while the clam sank to the bottom of the water.

The sun was setting and the rain was beginning to patter down. Kokusenya and his wife were just preparing to go home, when they were surprised to see a curious-shaped boat approaching. To their astonishment, a beautiful and noble-looking maiden was sitting in it. She seemed to be exhausted like "a *kaidō* blossom tortured by rain."

"Oh!" whispered Komutsu, "she looks like a Chinese beauty, such as one often sees in pictures. I suppose she has been exiled to some island on account of an intrigue."

"I thought she must be the ghost of the beautiful Empress Yōki."

"If you were in China, you could have taken such a beautiful girl to be your wife. What a pity it is that you were born in Japan, and have married a woman like myself. Ha! Ha!"

As they laughed and talked in this manner, the beautiful damsel came ashore, and stepping out of the boat, said something eagerly to them.

But Komutsu did not understand her language which afterwards proved to be Chinese. Kokusenyā, who had learned that language from his father, listened attentively to the maiden, and was astonished to hear that she was Princess Sendan, the younger sister of the Chinese Emperor, and that she had drifted over from China. He was filled with grief and indignation when she told him, with fast falling tears, of all the terrible things that had happened in her country. So he made up his mind to do his best to restore the Ming dynasty. His wife had no knowledge of what was passing in his mind, and was filled with intense jealousy when she saw Kokusenyā talking familiarly with the beautiful girl. At last her feelings got the better of her, and she burst into tears. "You hussy!" she cried, "you have come from China to steal the affections of my husband from me! See with what kindness and gentleness you treat him! Thus I will reward your wantonness!"

So saying, she seized a hoe, and was about to strike the maiden with it, when Kokusenyā caught her uplifted arm, saying: "Do not be so rash, wife! This lady is Her Highness Princess Sendan, the

younger sister of the Chinese Emperor of whom my father has so often told us. A horrible thing has happened. China has been invaded by barbarians, the Emperor has been cruelly murdered, and Her Highness has come over to Japan in that wretched boat, to seek shelter. I should very much like to conduct Her Highness at once to our home; but if I did so, the Governor of the county and the village headman would send policemen to capture her. I must see my father, and ask his advice about the matter. So you must hasten home, and bring him here immediately."

Komutsu was greatly ashamed at her hastiness, and made a most respectful obeisance to the Princess, and after apologizing very profusely, hurried home.

Kokusenya's father and mother, who had been on a visit to the shrine of the tutelary god, happened to pass along the sea-shore on their way home. Kokusenya was delighted to see them, and calling them to him, gave them a brief account of what the Princess had told him.

Afterwards he presented his parents to her. When Tei Shiryō heard of the death of the Emperor, he burst into tears.

"I am greatly honoured, and pleased to see Your Highness," said he, making a low obeisance to her. "You may have heard of me. I am Tei Shiryō, formerly a minister of the late most lamented Emperor. It is true that my wife and son are Japanese, but we should be monsters of ingratitude if we did not do our best to repay the Emperor for all his favours. I am old, but my son is young and brave, and well-skilled in tactics and military arts. So he can be of some service to you. I assure you that we shall not rest a moment until we have restored the Ming dynasty, and calmed the unrestful soul of the deceased Emperor. Have no doubts on that point, dear lady!"

"Are you indeed Tei Shiryō," asked the Princess, "of whom I have so often heard? Many thanks for your loyal and grateful intentions. May Heaven help you in your gallant undertaking—"; with these words speech failed her, and she was overcome with emotion.

Then Kokusenyā and his parents consulted together, and decided that he should immediately cross over to China, and search for General Go Sankei, and with his assistance undertake the

restoration of the Ming dynasty. His parents arranged to sail there after his departure, and agreed to meet him at Senri-ga-Také, a famous bamboo forest in China. It was planned that the Princess should accompany Kokusunya on a part of his voyage, and take shelter on some suitable isle, and he should send for her as soon as a favourable opportunity should occur.

After the discussion was over, Kokusunya bade his parents farewell, and taking the Princess by the hand proceeded to go on board the boat with her. At this moment his wife returned, and when she saw what was taking place, she was filled with amazement. She concluded that all three of them had agreed to cross over to China, and leave her behind. When they were in China, she was convinced, her husband would make the Princess his wife. Her jealousy then got the better of her, and she wept and stormed like a virago. Kokusunya tried to explain matters to her, but she would not listen. He was so perplexed that he did not know what to do; so he raised an oar to defend himself against her attacks. Suddenly she threw herself on her face and cried out: "Kill me! Kill me! My only desire is to die by my

dear husband's hand—but it is impossible for you to kill me with an oar. I must kill myself, for I cannot live another minute."

With these words she was about to throw herself into the sea, when Kokusunya seized her by the arm. "Dearest wife," he said kindly, "my admiration and love for you is beyond expression. This is a proof of your faithfulness. I will leave Her Highness in your charge. You will serve her with your utmost care while I am away. When I send a ship for her, you will accompany her to China. Always trust me, my dearest."

"Forgive me!" begged Komutsu, quite pacified by his reassuring words. "I will take Her Highness under my care, and will treat her with every respect. Don't trouble your mind about us. I hope you will have a successful voyage, and I shall await news of you. Farewell, dear husband!"

Then Kokusunya took leave of them all, and springing into the boat, set sail for the land of his father.

III

WHEN Kokusenya and his parents arrived in China, they found that the Tartars had completely taken possession of the Empire. They were unable to find out what had become of the old friends of Tei Shiryō, and no one could tell them whether General Go Sankei was living or dead. They were therefore greatly at a loss how to begin their undertaking, and how and from where they could gather together the few remaining adherents to the Ming dynasty. After a great deal of delay and consultation, they made up their minds to ask Kanki, a Chinese potentate, to help them. In former days, when Tei Shiryō had lived in China, he had had a Chinese wife who had died, leaving him an infant daughter. When he had crossed over to Japan, he had left the baby in charge of a nurse. He was intensely delighted to hear that his daughter had grown up safely, and was now the wife of General Kanki, who was the lord of a province, and owned a large castle. Kanki had formerly been one of the Emperor Shisō's retainers, but he

was now a powerful officer of the King of Tartary. Tei Shiryō and Kokusenyā thought the best thing they could do would be to try and persuade him to espouse their cause. So they set out for his abode, called the "Castle of the Lion," which lay about three hundred miles away.

But they came to the conclusion that if they all three went together, they would arouse the suspicion of the people; so they agreed to go separately, by different routes, and to meet at the foot of Mount Sekiheki, near the "Castle of the Lion." Tei Shiryō was to journey by himself, and Kokusenyā with his mother was to go by way of the famous Senri-ga-Také. Thus they set out on their respective ways.

Whilst they were travelling through the vast bamboo forest, Kokusenyā and his mother lost their way, and were uncertain in which direction to turn. Suddenly to their dismay, they heard a confused sound of cries, and the beating of drums, and sounds of trumpets. They listened to these sounds with considerable alarm. Soon after a gust of wind arose, which made the sand fly, and the leaves were shaken off the trees. The next moment a large tiger sprang out of the thicket.

Kokusenya was not at all frightened, and putting his mother in a safe place behind him, he prepared to fight the beast with open hands; for he would not use his sword against it. The tiger, glaring and roaring, sprang at him. Kokusenya encountered it with great skill, at one moment striking it with a clenched fist, at the next seizing its tail. Then he leaped on to its back and brought it down to the ground. After fighting for a little while, the animal drew back exhausted, and crouching on the ground, gasped for breath. Then the hero's mother ran up to him saying: "We are both Japanese, and though we are far away from Japan, there is no reason why the gods of Japan should not protect us!" With these words she handed him an amulet which she always carried about her person. Kokusenya received it reverently, and held it up before the tiger, which suddenly dropped its tail, drew in its paws, and trembled with fear.

At that moment a large band of Chinese soldiers appeared on the scene, and their captain cried out: "Stay! That tiger is our property! We have hunted it, in order to make an offering of it to His Majesty the King of Tartary from our

lord His Excellency Ri Tōten. I order you to deliver the animal to us at once. If you refuse, you shall die."

Kokusenya laughed. "Well," he said, "if you are so eager to have this tiger, bring your master Ri Tōten to this spot. I wish to see him and to speak to him. If you refuse my request, I will not surrender the animal to you."

The soldiers were enraged at this bold challenge, and rapidly drawing their swords, they approached Kokusenya, and furiously cut at him. Before this happened, he had tied the amulet around the tiger's neck, and drawing his great sword from its scabbard, he waited their attack.

One of the Chinese officers, availing himself of the chance given him by a slight delay, rushed forward to attack the old woman, who stood calmly in the background. Then a miracle took place. The amulet, which was around the tiger's neck, inspired the beast, and roaring furiously, it sprang at the officer. Paralysed with fright he immediately took to his heels. Then the tiger rushed at the other soldiers who had suffered severe wounds from the mighty strokes dealt them by Kokusenya. They were frightened out

of their wits and found it impossible to withstand the attacks of the hero and the tiger. So the helpless wretches flung themselves on the ground before Kokusunya and implored his mercy.

Kokusunya then told them why he had come over from Japan, and commanded them to embrace his cause and fight to the best of their ability for the restoration of the Ming dynasty. They could have no reason for refusing to obey him; so all of them, numbering some thousands, at once surrendered themselves to him, and announced their intention of regarding him as their leader. With them Kokusunya formed the foundation of a mighty army which was afterwards to conquer the Tartar invaders. With these newly recruited troops and his mother, Kokusunya passed out of the forest. Then he stationed his soldiers at a certain place, and with his mother, hastened to meet his father.

IV

KOKUSENYA and Tei Shiryō met at the foot of Mount Sekiheki, and they immediately set out for General Kanki's castle, where they arrived at nightfall. The fort was stronger than any they had ever seen or heard of. The stone ramparts were of a great height, and the moat was so deep that the water was of a dark-blue colour. Here and there within the parapet, catapults had been placed ready to shoot stones and arrows at a moment's notice. Kokusunya walked up to the gate and cried aloud: "Ho there! Here is one who wishes to speak with His Excellency General Kanki. Open the gate!"

The sentries replied: "His Excellency General Kanki has been away since yesterday at the Court of His Majesty the great King of Tartary. We do not know when he will be back. But let us tell you, that even if he were at home, it would be unpardonable presumption for a stranger to demand an interview with him,—especially at night. Let us hear your business, and we will de-

liver your message to His Excellency. You must give up all hope of being received by him in audience."


"Well!" broke in Tei Shiryō, "if His Excellency General Kanki is absent, we must see Lady Kanki. Kindly tell her that we have come over from Japan. She will then understand who we are."

Hardly had he spoken these words, when a great uproar arose within the castle.

"They are Japanese! We must beware of them! They must be here for some suspicious purpose, if they insist upon seeing our lady!"

With these words several soldiers appeared at the parapet, ready to fire on them with their muskets.

The noise of the tumult reached the ears of Kinshō, Kanki's wife. Running up the tower, she bade the soldiers cease, and looking down outside the gate, she said: "Visitors, I am Kanki's wife. My name is Kinshō. What do you want with my husband? The name of Japan has a pleasant sound to my ear! Kindly tell me who you are."—She was wondering if her father, by any chance, was amongst the visitors.—"Soldiers, do not fire your muskets! Do not be so rash!"

 Tei Shiryō looked up to his daughter's face through the hazy light of the spring moon. "Oh!" said he, "are you indeed Kinshō? I am your father, Tei Shiryō. I parted from you when you were a mere baby two years old. Nevertheless, you must have heard of me from your nurse. I crossed over to Japan, and settled in a part called Hirado. I married a Japanese woman, who has since borne me a son. Both of them are here with me. We have come to have a private consultation with your husband, and to ask for his assistance in a matter of great importance. Please order the gates to be opened, and allow us to come in."

Kinshō rejoiced greatly to hear Tei Shiryō's words, and she longed to rush down and embrace him. But she was the wife of General Kanki, the lord of the castle; so it was impossible for her to act with such lack of dignity in the presence of the soldiers.

"All those matters are well known to me," returned Kinshō, overcome with emotion. "But unless you will give me some proof, I cannot believe that you are my father. Give me some proof, if you can!"

Hereupon the soldiers thoughtlessly cried *At* with one voice: "Give us some proof!"

"My dearest daughter," replied the old man, holding up his hands. "If any proof is wanted, it is in your own possession. Before I departed for Japan, I painted a portrait of myself, and left it with your nurse, to be given to you as a memento of me. I have changed since then, but my features are still much the same. May I ask you to compare the picture with me? Then I am sure your doubts will be removed."

"Yes," said Kinshō, "I have that picture."

She took out the portrait which she always carried about her person. She then held up a mirror, in such a way that the moonlight cast a reflection of the old man's face upon it; and she looked intently from one to the other for a considerable time. The jet-black hair and vivacious expression in the portrait contrasted strongly with the wrinkled face and snowy locks reflected in the mirror. But the eyes, mouth, and nose of both were so similar, that it was impossible to doubt his identity.

"Oh, you must be indeed my own true, and long-lost father!" cried the lady. "Forgive me



She then held up a mirror

my discourteous words. I have longed for this moment for many years. I was left a motherless orphan here in China, and was filled with grief when I heard that you had gone to Japan. When I heard that Japan was far away in the East, I used to worship the rising sun, as symbolical of you, every morning. How often have I unrolled my map of the world, and have examined the countries of China and Japan! Japan seemed on the map to be very near, but I was astonished to hear that it was three thousand miles away. Thus I despaired of ever meeting you in this life, so you can imagine how delighted I am to see you, after an interval of more than twenty years. My heart is filled with joy and gratitude, my dearest father!"

So saying, Kinshō burst into tears of joy, and Tci Shiryō was also filled with emotion. The tears of the father and daughter seemed to mingle with the moonbeams, which became dim, as with a shower of rain.

Now Kinshō greatly wished to admit the three visitors immediately. But this was impossible, because, as the war was not yet quite over, General Kanki had been strictly ordered by the King of

Tartary on no account to admit foreigners into the castle; even if they were his own kith and kin. She told them of the order, and added that she was at a loss what to do.

"It is impossible to disobey the King's order," said the old mother. "But I do not think you need fear an old woman like myself. I am very desirous of seeing you, so surely you can let me in, even if you refuse to admit the others."

"That is quite impossible," cried the sentinels. "Women are not excepted from the Imperial order. But if you will allow yourself to be bound with cords like a prisoner, our lord and master will not incur the wrath of the Majesty, should he hear of it. So if you insist on entering the castle you must be securely bound, old woman."

"Pshaw! What insolence!" cried Kokusunya, wrathfully. "You ask us to bind your lady's step-mother? It is unreasonable beyond belief! We Japanese will not endure such a gross insult! We will not meet or consult with your master if those are his conditions."

With these words Kokusunya took his aged mother by the arm, and was about to depart.

But she shook him off saying: "Have patience, my son! If we wish to seek the assistance of another in a matter of great moment, we must put up with affronts and hardships. If our request is granted, I am willing to be bound with cords, nay, even to be fettered and handcuffed. Pray bind me securely, at once, my husband, without another moment's hesitation."

Tei Shiryō was moved by her words, and he bound her, very reluctantly, hand and foot. The sentinels then opened the gate, and permitted her to enter. Kinshō burst into tears again when she saw this.

"O dear father, and brother!" she cried. "Forgive the apparent unkindness of the soldiers. They may not disobey the decree. I shall take my mother in my charge, so you need not be anxious about her safety. She will tell me about your request, and I will inform my husband, and do my best to gain his consent."

She added that, in the event of her husband consenting, she would pour a solution of face powder into the moat. If he refused, she would pour a solution of rouge. If the river should turn white the visitors would know that the answer

was in the affirmative. If it should turn red, they would know that he had refused.

It must be mentioned that the water which Lady Kinshō used for her toilet flowed down into an artificial pond, which led to the moat, and from there it ran into the Hoang Ho.

Kokusenya and his father therefore had to watch the current of the Hoang Ho, in order to know the result of his mother's interview with Kinshō.

V

WHEN the old lady had been received into the castle, Lady Kinshō took her into an inner apartment, where she welcomed her as warmly, and treated her as kindly, as if she had been her real mother.

Presently General Kanki returned in high spirits. He had that day been promoted to the rank of commander of a regiment of 100,000 cavalry; been made a councillor of state, and raised to the peerage. Kinshō met him at the porch with great reverence, and, after greeting him, told him of all that had happened. She gave an account of how her father, stepmother, and stepbrother had come from Japan to ask a favour of him, but how, according to the royal command, she had bade her father and brother go away and only admitted her mother bound with cords.

Kanki praised her for her thoughtfulness, and said that he would see his mother-in-law immediately. The old woman came in. After expressing his great joy at meeting her, he told her that

he deeply regretted having to receive her ~~bo~~ in that manner.

"What do you want with me?" he asked in mild, kind tones. "Please tell me everything, without reserve. I will do anything in my power to help you."

On hearing this, the old woman heartily thanked him for his kindness. She then told him how Princess Sendan had drifted over to Japan the previous winter, and how Kokusunya and Tei Shiryō had determined to strike for the restoration of the Ming dynasty. After her narration, she earnestly begged Kanki to espouse their cause.

"Then," said Kanki with surprise, "is Kokusunya of Japan my wife's brother? He is famous all over this country for his bravery. I was formerly in the service of the Ming Emperor; but after his death I became a retainer of the King of Tartary. I am now the lord of a province and a castle under his sovereignty. I quite understand and fully sympathize with your request, but I cannot give you an immediate reply. You must give me time to think the matter over."

"You are a coward!" said the old woman excitedly. "When one first gives utterance to a

matter like this, there is danger of it becoming known abroad, if an immediate answer is not given. Whether you grant our request or refuse it, you must give us a reply at once. Please do this for us."

"Certainly, madame, I will immediately take Kokusenyā's side."

No sooner had he spoken, than Kanki seized his wife with one hand, and drawing his sword with the other, attempted to plunge it into her breast. The old woman, almost overcome with horror and amazement, sprang to her feet, and rushed between them in order to shield her step-daughter with her own person. Then she demanded in sharp tones: "Are you mad to commit such a wanton outrage? Why do you wish to kill Kinshō before her mother? Don't be afraid, daughter, you shall not die as long as I am here!"

Overwhelmed with her stepmother's kindness, the terror-stricken Kinshō cried, with sobs: "Mother, your kind words touch me to the heart; but you must not be wounded for my sake!"

Kanki sprang back, and, bowing to the old woman, replied: "Pardon me for my mad act, but

the truth is, the King of Tartary summoned me to him yesterday, and gave me the following commands: 'News have reached me that a warrior named Kokusunya has come over from Japan with the intention of restoring the Ming dynasty. So I order you to gather together 100,000 cavalry, and to march against him in order to subjugate him.' I did not know that Kokusunya was my brother-in-law, so I vowed to kill him, and thus rid the King of his anxiety and trouble. But if I now suddenly join Kokusunya, and hoist a banner of revolt, everyone will say that my wife has influenced me, and I should go down to posterity as the laughing-stock of all the nation. Thus I should forfeit all my honour as a warrior. Therefore I have determined, even though it is a cruel deed, to kill my wife. Then all grounds for such censure will be removed. After I have done that, I shall espouse Kokusunya's cause. Dearest wife, it is my loyalty to the late Emperor that makes me wish to kill you, but it is your mother's kindness which dissuades me from doing so"—at this point he burst into hot and passionate tears.—"It cuts me to the heart to make such a terrible request, but, my dearest wife, are you willing to sacrifice

yourself and to lay down your life for the sake of my loyalty?"

It gradually dawned upon Kinshō what her husband intended to do. "Well," she said with a resigned look, "I understand your reason, my husband. I am willing to be put to death, if by doing so I can be of service to the Imperial House. You may take my life."

She gently pushed the old woman to one side, and bared her breast to receive Kanki's sword. The mother, who was unable to use her hands owing to the cords, took Kinshō's sleeve between her teeth, and forced her away. Kanki then approached his wife with his naked sword; but the old lady, quick as thought, ran behind him and pulled him off with her teeth. Kinshō then again prepared to meet her fate, but the mother, almost choked with grief, cried out: "Stop! Stop! If I allow you to kill Kinshō, everyone will say that a Japanese stepmother has allowed a Chinese stepdaughter to be killed on account of her hatred of the latter! I should not only be shamed, but it would be an everlasting disgrace to Japan. I could never endure it. Kanki, if you are determined to kill Kinshō, you must kill me also."

With this utterance she burst into bitter tears. Kanki stood for some minutes, buried in thought, his reasoning powers struggling with his emotion. But reason was victorious.

"Mother," he said, "if you will not allow me to kill my wife, I shall be obliged to fight with Kokusunya in compliance with the Tartar King's commands. Now that I must fight with your son, I will not detain you any longer in the castle, lest people should think I have kept you as a hostage. Wife, order a palanquin in which to send our mother from the castle."

"There is no need to send her away, my lord," answered Kinshō. "As I promised my father, I will pour a solution of rouge into the moat as a sign of your refusal." As she spoke, she ascended to her toilet chamber, and taking a small dagger she thrust it into her breast. She then let a quantity of her blood flow into a basin, and poured it into the pond below her apartment.

The blood-dyed water slowly flowed out to the Hoang Ho. Kokusunya saw it, and was keenly disappointed to learn of Kanki's refusal. Then he was filled with alarm for his mother's safety. He hurried to the castle-gate, and soon found means

Mr. Kōshirō



Mr. Kōshirō as *Kokusensha*

of entering the courtyard. In one of the apartments there, to his great joy, he found his mother safe and sound. He sprang up, and cutting her free from the cords, presented himself before Kanki.

"You are General Kanki, I believe," he said in angry tones. "I sent my mother into the castle to ask for your assistance. When you bear in mind that your wife is my sister, you should willingly and gladly support me. Give me an immediate answer!"

"Humph!" replied Kanki, disdainfully. "If you appeal to me through my affection for my wife, I am still more determined to refuse your request. I am not so poor-spirited that I allow a woman to influence me! Leave me! I wish to have no further communication with you!"

Then both heroes hurled expressions of defiance at each other, and prepared to fight, when Kinshō staggered into the room, holding a blood-stained dagger in her hand. "Stop! Stop!" she cried. "See from where I obtained the rouge which I poured into the water. Let that settle your quarrel."

After saying those words, she bared her breast from which the blood was flowing freely.

Kokusenya and Kanki looked with amazement at the horrible sight, and the old woman fell swooning to the ground.

"My husband!" the dying woman gasped. "I have killed myself! No one now can say that you have been influenced by a woman! Pray support my brother, and grant my parents' earnest request!"

"What a noble death!" exclaimed Kanki, turning aside to hide his fast falling tears. "Your death shall not be in vain, dear wife!" He then fell on his knees before Kokusenya. "Brother, I will gladly join you in your noble undertaking. Allow me to become an officer under your command. May I suggest that you assume the title of Kokusenya, Commander-in-chief, and King of Yempei."

So saying, Kanki crossed the room to a chest, from which he produced a complete suit of commander-in-chief's armour. This he presented to Kokusenya, who wore it thankfully. His mother looked at him with admiration. "My heart is filled with joy!" she said. "Now that General Kanki has joined you, you will doubtless succeed in your task. But if I live on after the death of

my stepdaughter my words would prove false. It will not only be my own shame, but also a disgrace to Japan. I can't bear the thought of it." She had scarcely uttered these words, when she snatched Kinshō's dagger, and plunged it into her own throat. Kanki and Kokusenyā sprang up with horror. "Don't either of you be surprised!" said the old woman with dying gasps. "Don't grieve at our deaths! Regard the King of Tartary as the enemy of your mother and of your wife, and be sure to take revenge upon him. You will thus do your best for the restoration of the Ming dynasty. Farewell!"

Almost at the same moment, the old woman and Kinshō breathed their last.

VI

KOKUSENYA, with the assistance of General Kanki, was able to organize a mighty army as powerful as "a tiger furnished with wings"—to quote a Chinese saying. He fought many battles against the Tartars, and captured over fifty of their castles. Wherever he led his banner he was crowned with victory, and the name of Kokusunya, King of Yempei, speedily became known throughout the length and breadth of the country.

In the meantime, General Go Sankei had been hiding for seven dreary years, with the young heir to the Ming throne, in a secluded place in Mount Kyūsen.

When he heard the news of Kokusunya's victories, he came down with the young Prince, and joined the army.

Kokusunya's wife Komutsu, with Princess Sendan, came over from Japan.

Then Kokusunya in conjunction with Generals Go Sankei and Kanki, marched upon Nanking, now the Tartar King's stronghold, and quickly

and easily captured it. The Tartar King was punished by being beaten with five hundred blows of a bamboo, and was afterwards sent back as a prisoner to Tartary. The traitor Ri Tōten was put to death, and Kokusenyā made the young Prince ascend the throne, naming him Emperor Eiryaku, to the extreme joy of all the nation.

Irish Plays

By
LADY GREGORY

Lady Gregory's name has become a household word in America and her works should occupy an exclusive niche in every library. Mr. George Bernard Shaw, in a recently published interview, said Lady Gregory "is the greatest living Irishwoman. . . . Even in the plays of Lady Gregory, penetrated as they are by that intense love of Ireland which is unintelligible to the many drunken blackguards with Irish names who make their nationality an excuse for their vices and their worthlessness, there is no flattery of the Irish; she writes about the Irish as Molière wrote about the French, having a talent curiously like Molière."

"The witchery of Yeats, the vivid imagination of Synge, the amusing literalism mixed with the pronounced romance of their imitators, have their place and have been given their praise without stint. But none of these can compete with Lady Gregory for the quality of universality. The best beauty in Lady Gregory's art is its spontaneity. It is never forced. . . . She has read and dreamed and studied, and slept and wakened and worked, and the great ideas that have come to her have been nourished and trained till they have grown to be of great stature."—*Chicago Tribune*.

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Lady Gregory has preferred going for her material to the traditional folk-history rather than to the authorized printed versions, and she has been able, in so doing, to make her plays more living. One of these, *Kincora*, telling of Brian Boru, who reigned in the year 1000, evoked such keen local interest that an old farmer travelled from the neighborhood of Kincora to see it acted in Dublin.

The story of *Grania*, on which Lady Gregory has founded one of these plays, was taken entirely from tradition. Grania was a beautiful young woman and was to have been married to Finn, the great leader of the Fenians; but before the marriage, she went away from the bridegroom with his handsome young kinsman, Diarmuid. After many years, when Diarmuid had died (and Finn had a hand in his death), she went back to Finn and became his queen.

Another of Lady Gregory's plays, *The Canavans* dealt with the stormy times of Queen Elizabeth, whose memory is a horror in Ireland second only to that of Cromwell.

The White Cockade is founded on a tradition of King James having escaped from Ireland after the battle of the Boyne in a wine barrel.

The choice of folk history rather than written history gives a freshness of treatment and elasticity of material which made the late J. M. Synge say that "Lady Gregory's method had brought back the possibility of writing historic plays."

All these plays, except *Grania*, which has not yet been staged, have been very successfully performed in Ireland. They are written in the dialect of Kiltartan, which had already become familiar to readers of Lady Gregory's books.

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